

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RASTAFARI WOMEN IN TSHWANE, SOUTH AFRICA:  
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**By**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that Lived experiences of Rastafari women in Tshwane, South Africa: An anthropological perspective is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software. The result summary is attached.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Tsholofelo Masetshaba Mosala

## **Dedication**

To my mother, Grace Matlhodi Mosala, who made me  
To my twin sister Tshegofatso and brother Keoagile Mosala,  
for always been there for me.

## ABSTRACT

Rastafari (this term is preferred to Rastafarianism) is known as a movement which originated in Jamaica and has since spread throughout the world. The movement has attracted much attention from the public and media worldwide because of reggae music. This study set out to investigate the lived experiences of Rastafari women of Tshwane. The purpose of the study was to describe their experiences regarding their roles, duties and responsibilities. It paid particular attention to the behavioural patterns of women within what is often regarded as a patriarchal order. The study was qualitative in nature and made use of various data gathering techniques such as life histories, focus groups, semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interviews, observations and field notes. My findings are, firstly, that Rastafari pays very scant attention to women. Secondly, in contemporary times some practices enforced by their holy books feel oppressive. Lastly, the lived experience reveal that Rastafari as a culture changes with time and women influence the movement.

**Rastawomen, Rastafari, Reggae, Tshwane, Livity, Dreadlocks, Rastafarianism, Jah, Gender, Rastafarianism**

## MANWELEDZO

Rasiṭafari tshi ḡivhea sa tshigwada tshine vhubvo hatsho ha vha ngei Jamaica zwino tsho phaḡalala na ḡifhasi ḡoṡhe. Tshigwada tsho kunga vhunzhi ha zwitshavha na nyandadzamaḡhungo ḡifhasini ḡoṡhe nga nṡhani ha muzika wa rigei. Ngudo iyi yo dzudzanyelwa u ṡoḡisisa nga ha vhutshilo ha tshigwada tsho tsikeledzwaho tsha vhaḡumakadzi vha Rasiṭafari vho no wanala Tshwane. Ndivho ya ngudo iyi ndi u ṡalusa tshenzhemo yavho zwi tshi ya kha mishumo na vhuḡifhinduleli havho. Yo sedzesa kha kutshilele kwa vhaḡumakadzi kha sisiṡeme ya matshilisano hune vhanna vha dzhiwa sa vhone vhalanguli. Ngudo yo lavhelesa nga maanḡa kha u ṡanḡavhudza vhuvha ha tshithu ho shumiswa thekhiniki dzo fhambanaho dza u kuvhanganya data u fana na ḡivhazwakale dza vhutshilo, zwigwada zwo sedzeswaho khazwo, na inthaviyu dzine mbudziso dza vha dzo thoma dza dzudzanywa na inthaviyu ine mbudziso dza vha dzi songo dzudzanywa, kuvhonele na maḡhungo e a kuvhanganywa kha vhuṡo. Mawanwa anga ndi, zwa u thoma, Rasiṭafari i sedzesa zwiṡuku kha vhaḡumakadzi. Zwa vhuvhili, zwazwino maitele ane a tevhedzwa nga maṡwalo makhethwa a pfala a tshi tsikeledza. Zwa u fhedzisela, vhutshilo ha tshigwada tsho tsikeledzwaho vhu dzumbulula uri mvelele ya Rasiṭafari ine vhadzulapo vha Afrika vha shela mulenzhe khayoyi

khou shushedzwa nga mvelele ya mashango a vhukovhela, i ne ya kunga na u tšanganedzwa nga vha fumakadzi. Zwenezwo, Rastafari sa tshigwada tsha mvusuludzo a yo ngo ima fhethu huthihi fhedzi i khou shanduka na tshifhinga.

**Mufumakadzi wa murastafari, Rastafari, Rigai, Tshwane, Mvelele ya rastafari, Ngwasa, Kutshilele kwa tshirasta, Mudzimu, Mbeu, Kutshilele kwa tshirasta**

## **TSHOBOKANYO**

Rastafari e itsege jaaka mokgatlho o o tlholegileng kwa Jamaica, mme go tloga foo wa anamela mo lefatsheng lotlhe. Mokgatlho o o nnile le kgogedi e kgolo mo bathong le bobegakgang lefatshe ka bophara ka ntlha ya mmimo wa reggae. Patlisiso eno e ikaeletse go sekaseka maitemogelo a a tshedilweng ke basadi ba kwa Tshwane ba Rastafari. Maikemisetso a patlisiso ke go tlhalosa maitemogelo a bona mabapi le seabe, ditiro le maikarabelo a bona. E etse tlhoko thata mekgwa ya maitsholo ya basadi mo go se gantsi se kaiwang e le thulaganyo e e bayang banna kwa godimo. Patlisiso e ne e le e e lebeleletseng go tlhaloganya mabaka le megopolo (qualitative) mme e dirisitse mekgwa e e farologaneng ya go kokoanya tshedimosetso go tshwana le hisetori ya botshelo, ditlhopho tsa puisano (focus groups), dipotsolotso tse di rulaganeng fela di sa tsepama (semi-structured interviews) le dipotsolotso tse di sa rulaganang tse di tsenelelang ko botennye jwa kgang, go ela tlhoko mmogo le dintlha tse di kwadilweng mo tsamaong ya patlisiso. Diphithlelelo tsa me ke gore, sa ntlha, Rastafari e tsaya basadi tsia go se kae fela. Sa bobedi, mo dinakong tsa ga jaana, ditiro dingwe tse di laelwang ke dibuka tsa bona tse di boitshepo di utlwala di gatelela. Sa bofelo, maitemogelo a senola gore setso sa Rastafari se mo go sona Bantsho ba nang le seabe, se tshosediswa ke setso sa bophirima se se nang le kgogedi, mme se amogelwa ke basadi. Ka jalo, Rastafari jaaka mokgatlho wa tsosoloso, ga e a tsepama, mme e fetoga le dinako.

**Basadi ba Rasta, Rastafari, Reggae, Tshwane, Libiti/Botshelo jwa semoya jwa Rastafari, Ditereteloko, Borastafari/Tumelo ya serasta, Jah, Bong, Borastafari/Tumelo ya serasta**

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## Glossary

Babylon	Opposition to belief system
Babylon sticks	Cigarettes
Chanting	Dance moves
Dreadtalk or I talk	Dialect of English in use among members
Dub	Gatherings
Dub poet	A person who recites poetry
Earth day	Birthday
Elders	Older individuals
Flash	Animal meat
Fya	Forbidden Babylon systems
Ghetto	Home or neighbourhood
Grounation	The process of congregation or meeting
Holy herb	Marijuana, ganja or dagga
Holy Piby	Bible
Idrens	Followers
Iman	Men
InI	Oneself
Irie	Happiness
Ises	A place for a church service
Ital	Organically grown vegetarian food
Ites	Men, women and youth
Kingman	A partner or husband
Kuchie	A smoking container made of coconut attached with a wooden smoke pipe
Lion of Judah	His Late Majesty, Haile Selassie
Livity	Lifestyle or culture
Mabarkemeans	To bless in Amharic
Mommas	Older women

Oman	Women
Overstand	To understand
Patwah	Slang
Poppas	Older men
Queen	Women
Rainbow	Colours, red, gold, green and black
Rastafari house	An order that denotes a section
Rastafari occasion	Also known as dubs gathering where adherents come together for celebrations
Reasoning	Verbal engagement on different social issues in order to reach a conclusion on a specific matter
Riddims	Instrumental accompaniment to a song
Sabbath	Saturday observed for prayer and abstaining from work
Selector	A person who plays music from the music desk, also known as DJ
Skanting	Dancing
Strong	Weekend
Vegan	A person who does not eat, seafood, dairy or use animal products.
Vegetarian	A person that does not eat animal products and their diet consists of vegetable, sometimes eggs or dairy products.
Youth	Younger children from three to fourteen
Zion	Place of salvation and a promised land
Zion train	A popular dance step that is performed at gatherings

## List of abbreviations

City of Tshwane	COT
The Commission for the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities.	CRL Rights Commission
Ethiopian Africa Black International Congress	EABIC
Rastafari United Front	RUF
South African Students' Organisation	SASO
The Association of Social Anthropology	THEASA

# **Chapter One: Orientation to the Study**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Within public life Rastafari livity is a very small but publicly visible religious movement across South Africa. The Rastafari phenomenon has been questioned and interpreted in various ways over time and different schools of thought have tried to fit Rastafari livity into a category. As Murrell (1998:3) writes “many researchers and media persons have been unsuccessful in their attempts to pigeonhole the movement into preconceived, stereotypical categories, such as – “religious cult”, “escapist movement”, “reactionary”, “anachronistic”, “eccentric Judeo-Christian heresy”; “apocalyptic Christian movement”, “messianic millennial cult” and “African Caribbean religious myth.” Rastafari livity has flourished in this country, particularly after the introduction of reggae music and the establishment of a democratic South Africa (Chawane 2012). The Rastafari livity is accepted and recognised by the State, including the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic (CRL) Communities (2016) as an organisation that should practice its culture and religion.

The focus of this section is the development of Rastafari livity in the townships surrounding Tshwane in Gauteng Province. Rastafari livity was made possible by the worldwide spread of reggae music. It is well-established that many artists were men, but the involvement of women within reggae and Rastafari at large needs to be interrogated. Very little attention has been given to the women of the Rastafari. Because of this and in particular, the study focuses on the lived experiences of women in the Tshwane Rastafari group, especially their roles, duties, responsibilities and status. This dissertation has been thus not just about the lived experience of Rastafari women; it is also concerned with their contributions and development as such women. It was suggested that Rastafari women cannot be viewed in isolation, but should be looked at through multiple lenses such as gender and religious perspectives. In telling their experiences, the study shows their past, present and future as Rastafari women of Tshwane.

## 1.2 Rastafari

Although the focal point of the study is in Tshwane, it is important to understand the global emergence and origins of Rastafari. It has been variously defined by scholars such as Witvlei (1985:5) who views it as a type of 'liberation theology' or 'Black theology' which attempts to address problems of poverty as well as spiritual and social injustices. This is based on the fact that there are some parallels that can be drawn between Rastafari and the two theologies mentioned. The terms 'African liberation theology' and 'African theology' have been used interchangeably to denote the Christian theological reflection that is carried out in the experiential situation of the African people, a feature which they share with Rastafarianism (Gichaara 2005:75-85). Scholars such as Kebede, Thomas, and Knottnerus (2000:313-337) see it as a Messianic-Millennarian cult, which is a belief held by a religious, social, or political group or movement concerning an impending major transformation of society, after which all things will be changed. According to Yawney (1995:63), "Rastafari has been defined as a millenarian movement, a sect, a cult, a way of life and a philosophy".

This study defines Rastafari as a way of life that refers to the use of material objects and rituals which are shared, symbolic and learnt by diverse socio-cultural societies to create meaning among them. The study uses the term 'Rastafari livity' to describe the Rastafari way of life and the movement at large. It also makes use of the terms Rastas and Rastafari adherents to describe the devotees of Rastafari livity. The term Rastafari is preferred over the term Rastafarianism, which also describes the way of life, because it is considered to be offensive by most Rastas. They are highly critical of "isms", which they see as a typical part of "Babylon culture", and dislike being labelled as an "ism" because it implies *ism* and *schism* which in turn implies division, to which adherents are strongly opposed.

Rastafari livity as a global way of life has grown phenomenally since its origin in the 1930s. It expanded beyond national boundaries, spreading worldwide, often through reggae (Salter 2008; Murrell 1998). Various scholars like Barrett (1977) and Yawney (1978) established approaches and theories to the study of the Rastafari movement. This section offers an historical, doctrinal and ideological background to Rastafari livity in order to contextualise the spiritual, symbolic attraction and spread of the latter in South Africa.

Rastafari livity originated as a movement in the Caribbean Island of Jamaica during the 1930s. From Jamaica, it spread to other parts of the world, including South Africa. The name Rastafari derives from the Amharic language and has a contextual meaning and a strong relation to the followers of Rastafari. According to Chawane (2008:164):

Ras means “prince” and Tafari “Head Creator.” Ras Tafari was the birth name of His Imperial Majesty<sup>1</sup> (H.I.M. as he is called by adherents of Rastafari movement) Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, who is also the divinity of the Movement.

Rastafari livity remains a phenomenon that fascinates anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and religious scholars. According to Hansing (2005:166) “Rastafari is continuously being appropriated and reinterpreted by different peoples in different ways, which has resulted in the ongoing emergence of new localized expressions of the movement”. Rastafari livity has to an extent changed and developed since many followers have reinterpreted it within their environment. Media and scholarly writings have tended to categorise Rastafari as a social movement which has spread worldwide. This travelling<sup>2</sup> culture is defined by Barrett (1977: 349-357) as both a messianic and a black revolutionary cult movement, a categorisation which mainly emphasises the movement’s origin and socio-religious dimensions. Rastafari livity is based on the history and foundation of its adherents. For many years, terms such as a religious or cultural movement were used. According to Price (2009:7)

Rastafari has much in common with “prefigurative” social movements in that the Rastafari identity (and its cultural complex) provides ideas for people experimenting with different ways of relating and living: people begin trying to model personally the society that they want to live in.

Rastafari livity is not the same everywhere as it has been infiltrated by people worldwide. It remains to be regarded as *ital* livity which refers to reality and the holistic balance of the body, mind and soul.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The genesis and evolution of the Rastafari movement are widely discussed in the literature by scholars (Barnett 2012; Hansing 2001; Lake 1998a; Lake 1998b; Rowe 1998). Until recently

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<sup>1</sup> His Majesty (1892-1975), as indicated, refers to Haile Selassie, the crowned King of Ethiopia

<sup>2</sup> ‘Travelling’ culture refers to Rastafari as transnational since it has influenced people around the globe.



these discussions paid scant attention to the status of and roles held by Rastafari women (Barnett 2012). The Rastafari belief system remains patriarchal, which overshadows women in the movement and makes them invisible in public space. Women mostly play subordinate roles that occur within the domestic areas, whereas men assume roles in the public space. The majority of women in the movement are stay-at-home mothers or self-employed. Women in the movement who are employed as artists or poets or who work for government institutions remain a minority group. According to Lake (1998a:236) “the discourse on Rastafari women relative to men is broadened by clarifying the specific religious belief and cultural practice that ‘legitimate’ women’s subordination.” Rastafari women’s roles are specified by the religious system and cultural background which places women in a secondary class and places men in the superior position.

In response to the invisibility of women within Rastafari livity, this research took four years from the period of 2013 until 2016 to investigate the roles of women in a Rastafari group in Tshwane. The research examined women’s subordination as claimed by scholars, as well as their identity and the duties which they undertake within this Rastafari group, paying particular attention to the Rastafari occasion. Therefore, the research question is:

*What are the perceptions and lived experiences that Rastafari women in Tshwane hold regarding their gendered roles, duties, responsibilities and status within the movement?*

#### **1.4 Aim**

The aim of the study is to describe the lived experiences of women in the Tshwane Rastafari group, which includes an exploration and analysis of their perceptions of their gendered roles within the Rastafari movement in Tshwane.

#### **1.5 Objectives**

In order to accomplish the aim of the study, the following objectives were formulated:

- Describe and analyse the official Rastafari doctrine regarding the role and status of women in society and its application in the group
- Explore and describe the roles of women in the Tshwane Rastafari group
- Explore and describe the lived experiences and perceptions that women in the Tshwane Rastafari group hold regarding their gender roles

## **1.6. Rationale for the Research**

The research is important because it aims to contribute knowledge about the role, duties, responsibilities and status of women in the movement, a topic which previously has been inadequately researched. Given the history of Rastafari and the limited studies conducted by various researchers about Rastafari and women, further research is necessary to fill the knowledge gap. I believe that this study will contribute to the literature based on the lived experiences of Rastafari women and how they experience gender roles in various places.

## **1.7. Research Design and Methodology**

### **1.7.1. The research design**

This is exploratory research that focuses on Rastafari women in Tshwane. As Davies (2006:1) writes, “exploratory research is a methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and with generating or building theory”. The research was ethnographic, and aimed at exploring beyond the surface level understanding of participants about their roles through long term research. It was designed to create holistic understandings of issues in which I am interested by using the inductive approach. According to Thomas (2006:238) “the primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies and presupposed theories”.

### **1.7.2. The research method**

A qualitative research approach was used to study the lived experience of these women. This approach was selected as qualitative research enables the researcher to gain understanding of the feelings and experiences of the participants in an analytical and interpretive way Bernard (2011). Furthermore, qualitative researchers seek to study participants in their natural settings while at the same time attempting to make sense of and to interpret the cultural patterns in terms of the meanings the participants attach to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2003:3). The qualitative research approach also tolerates various ways of making sense of the difference between behavioural patterns and the perceptions of the participants. In addition a Rastafari United Front representative was interviewed to further understand the movement.

### 1.7.3. Individual interviews

Interviews are dialogues between the researcher and the individual research participants. According to Bernard (1994:136), “interviews, in the loose sense of the term, are a common form of interaction during fieldwork”. They aim to achieve the research goal and should be directly and consciously constructed. According to Schensul and LeCompte (1999:120) “[the] in-depth, open ended interview is the most innovative and exciting form of ethnographic interviewing”. The main purpose is to explore undefined domains in the formative conceptual model and identify new domains. In this regard, I conducted thirty interviews with women within Rastafari livity. The interviews ranged from informal and conversational to semi-structured guided interviews to open ended interviews. Interviews were conducted in the social setting of Rastafari occasions with women from different backgrounds in Rastafari; the employed, unemployed and the stay-at-home women and mothers. The age groups of women varied between eighteen and sixty-five. Most interviews were recorded using an electronic voice recorder. Some of the interviews, due to the preference of the participants were not recorded but extensive notes were taken. All of the interviews were transcribed.

### 1.7.4. Observation and participant observation

The data collection included observation which played a significant role in the social field site. The approach to observations entails a systematic noting and recording of events. It also involves recordings of behaviours in social settings and observational records which take the form of field notes and writing (Marshall & Rossman 2006). In utilising this method, I additionally made use of participant observation, which according to Schensul and LeCompte (1999:70) refers “to a process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day to day activities of participant”. As a participant observer, I engaged in Rastafari activities at various sites such as Dubs, *Isees* and social gatherings. The field notes, video recording and photography of the events were analysed.

The participant observation took place for four years. I attended the Rastafari social gathering around Tshwane. The challenging part was with regard to focus group discussion which required women to take time from home and work obligations. As an outsider I felt as an intruder invading the women’s personal space. It was uncomfortable to ask participants about their lifestyles. However, there was an understanding between me and the participants who were aware of my research. My position as a researcher had a positive impact upon the study.

The participants were free to interact and share their own personal experiences within Rastafari livity. The focus group and interviews discussion took place in Atteridgeville, Mamelodi East, Mabopane, Soshanguve, and Ga-Rankua.

#### 1.7.5.Focus group discussions

A focus group discussion is basically a method to gather the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of a group of people about their lifestyle. According to Anderson (1990:21) “a focus group is a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic”. It comprises a type of interview with a group of people where the researcher can obtain the opinions and experiences in group settings where creative tension and sparks of ideas are generated by conversations between people. A focus group, as a research method, ‘involved more than one participant per data collection session’ (Wilkinson 2004:271). As such, the focus group method is sometimes referred to as a focus group interview, a group interview, or a group depth interview.

I held three focus groups with Rastafari women about their lived experiences within the movement. The first focus group incorporated five individuals between the ages of eighteen and sixty. The second comprised younger women, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, who are in school, employed or artists. This was conducted to discuss their experiences, challenges and outlook on Rastafari. The third focus group included the older women who are retired or at home. It focused on the traditional roles of women and the evolving or changing roles within the Rastafari group.

#### 1.7.6.Document analysis

Qualitative researchers can include to augment their data public and private records about a site or the participant in the documents in their study (Creswell 2007:230). The documents which were analysed include both published and unpublished materials such as newspapers, personal journals, photos, Rastafari experiences on the Rastafari website and other grey or secondary sources.

#### 1.7.7.Sampling

It was a challenge to establish the exact number of Rastas in Tshwane. According to the RUF no official census of the Rastafari community has ever been done. It is thought there are thousands of Rastas in Tshwane and hundreds of thousands all over South Africa (no exact

figures have been recorded), but it is thought that the South African Rastafari community is the largest in the continent as per the RUF. I was particularly interested in one specific Rastafari group called the Twelve Tribes of Israel. My interest in the Twelve Tribes of Israel lies in the fact that it is the dominant order in Tshwane. Specifically, my interest was in the major roles assigned to women within the group as well as the types of activities that form part of their routine and Rastafari policies and principles. Purposive sampling was utilised in order to obtain a selective and subjective sampling of the wider population. The participants were selected because they are part of the Rastafari community of Tshwane, which shares patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language. The demographic composition of the Rastafari community in terms of gender and age was taken into consideration in the selection of the participants. The purposive sampling was applied in two phases:

- In the first phase a representative sample was drawn from the targeted individual participants. Interviews were conducted with older and younger participants who were employed by government, self-employed, stay-at-home mothers or unemployed
- In the second phase, focus group interviews were conducted with women of various ages, particularly the stay-at-home and self-employed women, which made arranging interviews easier.

#### 1.7.8. Data analysis

Table 1 below records the approach taken by the study.

“Ethnographers ultimately produce some sort of written account of what they have seen, heard and experienced in the field. These are the data supporting their understanding of the participants and research site” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1996:35). I gathered information from the field and analysed it properly to ensure the validity and reliability of the end product. According to the definition by Schensul and LeCompte (1999:145), analysis is the process a researcher uses to reduce data to a narrative and its interpretation, in other words reducing large amounts of collected data and making sense of them. I went through the process of coding, sorting and sifting as tabled below.

STAGE	<i>Description of actions</i>
Narrative	Write some history

	Describe a social process. Make a list of important facts.
Coding	Create a conceptual framework
Interpretation	Develop a metaphor Look at theoretical framework: relevant theories Engage in speculation.

**1. Table 1**

Source: Schensul & Lecompte (1999)

This particular research applied a qualitative analysis of the data, as Bernard (2011:338) writes: “[that] analysis is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there at the first place”. The data collected was analysed for various meaningful patterns. There are several approaches to data analysis, including hermeneutic or interpretative, narrative and performance analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory analysis, content analysis and cross-cultural analysis. The data analysis used was the grounded theory, described by Bernard (2011:443) “as a set of techniques for 1) identifying categories and concepts that emerge from text, and 2) linking the concepts into substantive and formal theories”. The goal to obtain such data is to discover the participant’s main concern and how they try to resolve it. Below is a summary of the techniques I employed at various stages of the analysis.

I kept field notes of all observations, participant observations, interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. The field notes were jotted notes, also known as scratch notes. This was done so that I did not forget what was said during the interviews. This formed the basis of my data analysis in grounded theory. According to Bernard (2011:434), “discovering patterns in human experiences requires close, inductive examination of unique cases plus the application of deductive reasoning and grounded theory is a set of systematic techniques for doing this”.

Based on the above, the data were coded; meaning that they were broken into analytically relevant units. Notes were made in the margins of the transcript as a way of sorting and tagging data. There are different sections of data identified by means of codes based on the meanings that were attributed to them (Terreblanche 2006:324). Codes were added to phrases, lines, sentences and paragraphs. The coding process required me to move forwards and backwards through the transcripts, drawing on in-depth knowledge connected with the study. This resulted

in alteration of some of the meanings of the codes and re-coding previously coded transcripts. As Bernard (2011:435) describes the process, it requires “three steps in grounded theory: coding the texts for themes, linking themes into theoretical models and displaying and validating the models”.

I recorded the women’s role within Rastafari movement in the form of memos, and later on searched for similarities and differences within the transcript. As Bernard (2011:436) points out, “in memoing you continually write down your thoughts about what you’re reading.” These thoughts become information on which to develop theory. Memoing is taking field notes on observations about the text. I made use of different words, numbers, signs, and patterns to bring understanding to the text. Bernard (2011:455) indicates that “there are two approaches in the text analysis, inductive, hypothesis generating research and deductive, hypothesis-testing research”. In order to check the validity of data I made use of proximity matrices; Bernard (2011:340) explains “[that] proximity matrices contain measurements of variables for a set of items. It also contains measurements of relations or proximities, between items”. For example, EW=employed women, UW=Unemployed women. Code 1=home, Code 2=self-employed and Code 3= government jobs, Code 3=yes and Code 4=no.

## **1.8 Ethical considerations**

Proper consideration of rights of participants was respected and protected. The ethic provision in accordance to Department of Anthropology and Archaeology Ethic Committee was also considered for the duration of the study. The research was conducted in full-awareness and agreement of the participants as later discussed in informed consent and confidentiality sections. As a researcher, it was my obligation to make all necessary efforts to bring the research and findings to public domain in an appropriate manner. As the Association of Social Anthropologists (THEASA 2012) notes, anthropologists should be sensitive to possible consequences of their own work and should endeavour to guard against predictably harmful effects.

### **1.8.1. Informed consent**

It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide ethically-related information for potential participants. As Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:14) emphasise, “the researcher has the responsibility to inform participants in a research study which they are part of”. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006:1), “informed consent represents an important application of the ethical principle of respect for persons”. The researcher must have the consent of the people

involved in the investigation throughout the research process. The fundamental principle of informed consent is that subjects must base their voluntary participation in research projects on a full understanding of the possible risks involved. The participants were made aware and reminded that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time, and it was not compulsory to remain in the study should they be uncomfortable. An opportunity was provided to obtain information about the nature, results and findings of the study.

#### 1.8.2. Confidentiality and the right to privacy

Qualitative researchers have an obligation to protect participants and their wellbeing by not revealing their identities (Cohen & Morrison 2007). In this research, the right to privacy and confidentiality was ensured. Confidentiality entails that while the researcher can identify a given person, he or she essentially promises not to do so publicly. The researcher has a responsibility to guard the information that is confided to her. The names of participants were therefore replaced with pseudonyms. In the case of focus groups which can feel informal ethical requirements were applied. The questions focused on how do women in Rastafari experience the livity. The approach uses opened-ended questions and allows participants to freely respond and give their answers.

### 1.9 Conclusion

This first chapter presented the introduction and background of the study. The chapter also contains the problem statement, the aims of the study, a brief synopsis of the research strategy and ethical considerations. The main aim of the study is to describe the lived experiences of women in the Tshwane Rastafari group. The second aim was to describe women's experiences regarding their roles, duties, responsibilities and status. The research design used to answer the research question is qualitative in nature. Individual interviews, focus groups discussion and observation were used to collect data.

The next chapter offers an interdisciplinary literature review on Rastafari livity.



## **Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review provides an in-depth analysis of Rastafari in order to situate my study. The use of diverse literature of different disciplines and schools of thought assisted my understanding of Rastafari in South Africa. In particular, the review of literature which informs this chapter relates to culture, identity, religion, Black Consciousness Movement and women's issues.

### **2.2 Rastafari**

Rastafari is a global culture that has grown phenomenally since its origin in the 1930s, and has spread beyond ethnic boundaries and worldwide. From Jamaica, it spread to other parts of the world including South Africa. It is a phenomenon which has been studied by various scholars, such as Chawane (2008), Chevers (2008) and Price (2009). The study of Rastafari has been marked by a strong sense of categories such as cult or religion and is an occurrence that has fascinated anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and religious scholars. As it is continuously reinterpreted, in order for one to understand the dimensions of the approaches, it is thus vital to obtain clarity on the origins and history of Rastafari as a worldwide renowned travelling culture.

Rastafari is described as a culture or movement, but is considered by many adherents to be a way of life. Rastafari adherents take much from the Bible, although they believe that its message has been corrupted. According to Price (2009:65) "the Rastafari movement encompasses themes such as the spiritual use of cannabis and the rejection of the degenerate society of materialism, oppression, and sensual pleasures, all known as 'Babylon'. It proclaims 'Zion', referring to Ethiopia, as the original birthplace of humankind, and from the beginning of the movement has called for repatriation to Zion, the Promised Land and Heaven on Earth." From the Rastafari background of oppression and poverty it has developed into a travelling culture, which has influenced the world.

### **2.3 Rastafari as a Revitalisation Movement**

Adherents of different schools of thought view Rastafari as a religious cult, African Theology/Black liberation theology and or a revitalisation movement (Murrell 1998; Witvlei 1985). The difficulties in defining Rastafari have stimulated the discourse of many an academic (Price 2009). In essence, one has to be conscious of the paradigm and political affairs around which the idea of Rastafari way of life has been constructed. Rastafari is rooted in aspects of culture, religion and behavioural patterns. It is a simple philosophy within society which in Wallace's terms makes it a revitalisation movement, a stance validated by the political and communal conditions in which Rastafari developed. According to Wallace (1956:265) "a revitalisation movement is defined as a deliberate, organised, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." Thus, persons involved in the process of revitalisation must perceive their culture as a system that is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases; new traits.

In essence, Rastafari complies with the characteristics of a revitalisation movement which see cultures changing themselves. Wallace (1956) theory is based on two key concept which are stress and maze way. The concept of stress is to view a society as an organism, Wallace focuses on the mechanism of homeostasis<sup>3</sup> in society. He suggests, "Another key concept in understanding the revitalisation movement theory is the "mazeway."

The term revitalisation denotes a very large class of phenomena Wallace (1956:267) explains other terms employed to denote what he calls subclasses, distinguished by a miscellany criteria.

1. Nativistic movements," for example, are revitalisation movements characterized by strong emphasis on the elimination of alien persons, customs, values, and/or materiel from the mazeway.
2. Revivalistic movements emphasize the institution of customs, values, and even aspects of nature which are thought to have been in the mazeway of previous generations but are not now present.

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<sup>3</sup> Homeostasis is a mechanism in which a system tries to preserve its integrity by maintaining a minimally fluctuating, life-supporting matrix and by taking emergency measures under conditions of stress to preserve the constancy of this matrix.

3. Millenarian movement emphasize mazeway transformation in an apocalyptic world transformation engineered by the supernatural.
4. Messianic movement emphasize the participation of a divine savior in human flesh in the mazeway transformation.

Rastafari is a revitalisation movement because the adherents constructed an imagined alternative system for themselves during harsh conditions in Jamaica. According to Erskine (2005:59) “it is clear that Rastafari was a response to poverty, unemployment, economic deprivation, cultural alienation and the colonial way of life in Jamaica”. The Rastafari resistance to the social conditions and their approach to reality inaugurated research about the state of the movement.

Revitalisation movement incorporates other aspects of social life created by people to form a collective unit. This might be a belief or religion, political or social group. It is about creating a new life and a recovery from prior traumatic experiences to generating a sustainable environment Wallace (1956:268) describes the revitalisation process which consists of five somewhat overlapping stages as described below.

- 1) The steady state is one in which “culturally recognized techniques for satisfying needs operate in a way that chronic stress varies within tolerable limits.” Wallace (1956) contends, “During the first stage, the societal needs are basically met, and the stress in the system ‘varies within tolerable limits’”.
- 2) Period of Individual Stress is the stage in which tension rises. The causes, as mentioned above, can be varied from social uprooted-ness such as war, natural disaster, population explosion, and so forth, to personal difficulties such as loss of loved ones or property, unmet desires, or uncured diseases.
- 3) Period of Cultural Distortion during this stage period the old meaning system fails to function in maintaining the social equilibrium and is continuously called into question. In this situation, society demonstrates “the regressive response” in the form of alcoholism, intra-group violence, ambivalent dependency, collapse of kinship, irresponsibility in public officials, states of depression and self-reproach, and a variety of psychosomatic and neurotic disorders.
- 4) The Period of Revitalisation Wallace (1956:270-275) observes six functional stages within the revitalisation period (a) maze way reformulation in which the members begin to picture their society in a different way from the mainstream interpretation, (b) the

innovator plays the prophet's role and spreads the new maze way among interested people, (c) the prophets establish an organisation that connects society with their perspectives, (d) the organisation adapts to the resistance from society, and (e) as the number who accept the new maze way increases, a cultural transformation occurs. The revitalisation process comes to the end by accomplishing cultural transformation. Then, this new steady stage is the beginning of another cycle of the process.

Rastafari cannot be identified as a single type of revitalisation movement because elements of one type can appear in another one. It cannot be defined based on one concept, but we must rather look at other ideologies to better understand this globally adapted movement. It is Messianic because its adherents acclaim His Majesty Haile Selassie and can be part of a Millenarian Movement because it views the world as perfectible through human action. Viewed in this way, Rastafari is a revitalisation movement because it was established under harsh and stressful conditions as stated earlier. It involved socio-diverse individuals who came together as a collective to form an organised system amongst themselves. During the process, cultural formation and development emerged to strengthen the system.

## **2.4 Culture and Religion**

In anthropology, the concept of culture is viewed from multiple points, which is a critical notion in this discipline that has been subjected to rigorous critique. There are many definitions of what culture is or what it does. Various questions have been asked: where does culture reside? Is it a matter of practice or is it a purely mental construct? And to what extent is culture shared?

The concept of culture, as defined in anthropology, usually refers to societies defined in national or ethnic terms (Thornton 1983). However, the concept has been expanded to consist of the derivatives of experience, more or less organised, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves (Avruch 1998:17).

The main purpose of this section is to establish how Rastafari culture has been developed by individuals from diverse socio-cultural societies. This determination is done by looking at the shared material objects, the process of cultural learning and the meanings created among themselves. The idea of culture as it is used in the modern period acquired the main features of its meaning in the nineteenth century. It shares a complex intellectual history with the ideas

of ‘society’, ‘nation’ and an ‘organism’, all of which appeared in their contemporary sense around the beginning of the nineteenth century (Thornton 1983:19).

The study defines Rastafari culture as a way of life and religion that refers to the use of material objects which are shared, symbolic and learnt by diverse socio-cultural societies to create meaning among themselves. It argues that the behaviour, attitudes and thinking of Rastafari adherents represent the meanings they make of their surrounding realities. Culture as a way of life authorises the platform for performances and practices of everyday life within a particular group of people. The idea of culture as a way of life deals with nations, society and is also a process of social development. According to Thornton (1983:19) “the idea of ‘culture’ has frequently been fused with that of ‘society’, and they have been used interchangeably to refer to a general social state of affairs or to a more or less clearly recognisable group of people.”

Scholars such as Thornton (1983) and Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008) agree that culture has a history, as well as shared, learned and transmitted knowledge acquired by a group of people in order to create a meaningful environment. According to Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008:35) “culture is suddenly present everywhere-from the smallest event of everyday life to the most rarefied levels of academic analysis.” The idea of culture is a general process of human, social and learning development among individuals. As Matsumoto (1996:16) defines it: “... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next”.

Culture as learnt implies a personal experience in which one acquires knowledge and skills through study or being taught. Culture is learned and not inherited because it is derived from one’s social environment and not one’s genes. Rastafari culture is learned through the material objects (within social environment) and the behavioural patterns of the Rastafari adherents. Culture as learnt implies that individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together with the purpose of creating a way of living. As Chatman and Cha (2003:21) argue, “[culture] is a system of shared values defining what is important and norms defining appropriate attitudes and behaviours.” The idea of culture as shared is centred on Rastafari shared knowledge, belief artefacts and attitudes that exist among members. The Rastafari culture deals with establishing norms and standards applicable to their realities.

Culture as religion is objected by Rastafari adherents who argue that it is more spiritual than religious. Their objection is based on the belief that the movement is more of a way of life than a religion (Chawane 2014:214). The concept of religion is very complex and cannot fit into a single definition. Scholars such as Afari (2007) Chawane (2014) Swatos (2003) agree that religion comprises practices and belief systems which form a single moral group known as a church, temple or mosque, whilst Tukari (1999) emphasises that religion consists of theories of meanings.

The study concurs with Durkheim's notion of religion, who "sees religion as a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things set apart and forbidden, belief and practices which unite into a single moral community called a church and all those who adhere to them." (Fields 1995:44). The elements of religion are found within Rastafari regardless of how Rastafari adherents define themselves. There are ritual practices within the church setting such as Bible readings, singing of hymns, wearing dreadlocks and smoking of the herb. Such practices are religious within Rastafari livity, thus making it part of a religion.

Furthermore, Rastafari adherents view their movement as more than a religion because of their belief system rooted in Haile Selassie and Garveyism<sup>4</sup>. Their most fundamental belief is that Haile Selassie is the one and only true living God. Rastafari is rooted in daily practices than reserved for a specific day to attend a church services. According to Chevers (2008:18) "Haile Selassie is a devout member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He is prophesied to have descended from a Biblical lineage from Queen Sheba and King Solomon. In 1930, Tafari Mokonnen, Ras Tafari, prince regent of Ethiopia, was crowned emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, one of the most significant visual elements to Rastafari."

## **2.5 Identity**

In anthropology, the concept of identity, like culture, is complex to define. The term 'identity' has been studied and analysed by the social, psychological, sociological and collective theorists. According to Sökefeld (1999:417) "in social anthropology, the concept "identity" was used mostly in the context of "ethnic identity". Here, identity pointed not simply to

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<sup>4</sup> Garveyism is an aspect of Black Nationalism that refers to the economic, and political policies of UNIA-ACL founder Marcus Garvey.

selfsameness but to the sameness of the self with others; that is, to a consciousness of sharing certain characteristics (a language, a culture and values) within a group”. These elements are the components of a group’s identity, which explains the processes of different individuals coming together as a collective to create a form of identity for themselves.

It is essential to introduce the notion of identity in this study in order to better understand the social setting that connects people and the social environment in which personal identity is formulated. The term identity can also be conceptualised as a way of making sense of some aspect or part of one’s self-concept (Abrams 1994; Hogg 2003; Serpe 1987). This might include religious identity that lays down relevant objectives, goals and behavioural patterns. The study uses the definition of identity proposed by Erikson (1980:109) who states, “the term ‘identity’ expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential characteristics with others”. With that said, identity refers to characteristics of self and the social group, daily performances, behaviour and symbolism that ‘glue’ people together or bring about cohesion in a group. The section argues that identity has to do with more than one human aspect; it is about cultural sharing and collective performance among people. Accordingly, identity deals with self, which is the set of meanings created by actors and how they as a collective fit within that social identification.

Scholars such as De Munck (2013), Fearon (1999) and Jenkins (1996), agree that identity embraces more than one element. Identity serves as a bridge between self and social, it is about the meaning created by social actors and cultural models, which are symbolic to the group. Fearon (1999:2) argues:

Identity is presently used in two linked senses, which may be termed ‘social’ and ‘personal’. In the former sense, an ‘identity’ refers simply to a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes.

The social and personal aspect of identity is visible within the Rastafari group of Tshwane. It is the outer appearance that marks identity as Rastas or Rastafari adherents. The outer symbolism such as dreadlocks, peace colours, ganja and Patwah language glues them together. As De Munck (2013:179) declares,

Self, identities and cultural models are interactive, dynamic and interdependent systems that connect the biological, psychological, social and cultural dimensions of human life. Identities are the means by which the self-engages with the outside world and cultural models are the symbol

complexes which the self, via an identity, relies on for generating sensible output and making sense of input.

Identities are characteristic of self and social groups within the environment and deal with the performances and behavioural pattern of a group. In addition, Sarup (1996:14) notes “that identity has a history and must be localised in space and time.” Identity is heterogeneous and a choice that influences a person to relate to, or with, a particular group. It also addresses who one thinks one is, what one believes, and what one does. It is about the self-identification of a person and what they think of themselves rather than what the others think of them.

Rastafari identity is largely about cultural sharing and collective performance among people. Identity and culture complement each other because both deal with human aspects such as performance, symbolism and behaviour. As stated by Sarup (1996) identity has a history, like Rastafari identity which links with the political history of Jamaica and Ethiopia where King Haile Selassie I reigned for a number of years. Scholars (Kebede *et al.* 2000; Stratford 2011), note that Rastafari adherents in Jamaica had a historical bond with Africa. It is the shared past that links people together and shaped their identity to a certain extent. In relevance to the study identity is not fixed, but rather an ongoing process within society. It is a matter of product and process, simply meaning it is ongoing and continuously reinventing itself. The shared commonalities of persons create a strong bond among Rastafari adherents. It can be said Rastas share a collective bond which constitutes a collective identity.

Scholars such as Fominaya (2010) Polletta and Jasper (2001) and claim collective identity is defined as a process and self-interest which are the building blocks of a group. According to Fominaya (2010:401) “collective identity is not a ‘thing’ at all but a process that is generated through the interaction of movement members as they attempt to mobilise for a shared goal”. Rastas have since come together to create elements and attributes that make them one. In addition to the physical, it is also the psychological which deals with their behaviour patterns and thinking. For instance, Rastafari adherents of Tshwane share the belief that Jah is God, Babylon is oppression and Zion is freedom. They have a Constitution of Rastafari that allows them to abide by Rastafari orders. As Polletta and Jasper (2001) point out, “collective identity deals with the self-interest of individuals rather than movement or political groups”. When Rastafari adherents come together during the Ises or Dub gatherings they construct their own identity.



Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) explore the expression of identity-related attitudes as a function of participants' beliefs concerning their visibility to different audiences. This expression extends our understandings of the motivations for making an identity visible to others. Secondly, it sheds light on the complex relationship between the performance of one (e.g. Rastafari) identity and the performance of other (e.g. gender/national) identities. Thirdly, it suggests that the experience of making an identity visible could facilitate the subsequent performance of that identity.

Identity as performance is evident in the case study of Rastafari women's understandings and presentation. The ritualistic performances tailor their identity and cannot be separated from their culture. Religions often serve various psychological needs "more comprehensively and potently than other repositories of cultural meaning that contribute to the construction and maintenance of individual and group identities" (Seul 1999:553). Each religion typically provides its followers with a distinct theology and a coherent and stable set of norms, institutions, traditions, and moral values that supply the basis for an individual to establish and maintain a secure identity.

The construction of identity is a process that is ongoing and shaped by different identity markers including gender, ethnicity, religion and interpersonal relationships (Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Hermans-Konokpa, 2010). Thus, clothing shapes the identity of a group or persons wearing them, such as Buddhist monks, nuns, and Muslim women. Each religion typically provides a distinct set of consumption norms that become the blueprint for its followers. For example, Muslim women wear headscarves to cover their hair, and Jewish men similarly wear yarmulke for religious expression. The attire is symbolic and also forms part of separation between men and women. The burqa, like some other forms of "cover", has, in many settings, marked the symbolic separation of men's and women's spheres, as part of the general association of women with family and home, but not with public space where strangers mingled (Abu-Lughod 2006:785). The Muslim identity expression is similar to Rastafari because of the symbolism which marks the differences within the public space. The two groups are perfect examples for identity performances in everyday life.

The attire is one of the symbols that signifies social difference among people in society. For example, when women are veiled and wearing long robes this could refer to Anglican and Roman Catholic Nuns. Such women are immediately classified into a social group. Most

importantly, outsiders are able to identify specific groups by how they portray themselves. To better understand difference in religious consumption choices one can separate them into two broad categories, social and personal. At the social level, there may be substantial differences among the formal and informal norms of different religious traditions.

Identity performance makes individuals from the same movement visible within the same place. It is a reflection of symbolism that creates the visibility of Rastafari adherents in the public space. Identity performance can be distinguished in both women and men's physical appearance that makes them visible in public. At the same time, it could mark their gender roles within a group.

Identity plays a vital role within Rastafari because it allows individuals to have a sense of belonging within the group. Some of the social identifications of Rastafari livity are symbols such as the Ethiopian colours, the Lion of Judah on the flag and dreadlocks. These are the physical aspects of identity which are prominent within the Rastafari movement. The environment in which Rastafari identity developed was one of strong bonds of poverty and harsh conditions. It was then that Rastafari identity was established by a group of people who shared, learnt the cultures and had similar experiences. Due to transnationalism which is cultural processes that extend beyond boundaries of national-state, Rastafari livity was adopted in different places and by different racial groups. Identity embodies cultural transformation and development within the Rastafari movement. Throughout the years, Rastafari adherents have brought changes and new meanings to Rastafari identity.

The idea of identity, as noted, is complex to define but it is shared and has meaning among Rastafari adherents. Rastafari is visually embodied by dreadlocks, rainbow colours and individuals performing or acting their identity. The social identities are localised and promoted within the changing times. Rastafari identity has a magnificent history of origin in Jamaica which has spread and had an impact around the world.

## **2.6 Nature and Origin of the Rastafari Movement**

From its inception the Rastafari movement soon grew into an international one. Its belief system has been influenced by African tradition and culture as well as the Bible. Scholars such as Barrett (1977), Hansing (2005) and Yawney (1978) have conducted research that has been particularly important in the study of Rastafari. As Edmonds (2003:3) argues, "since its

emergence among the poor in Jamaica in the early 1930s, the Rastafarian movement has progressed from being an obscure group of protesting outcasts in the ghettos of West Kingston to being a movement firmly entrenched in Jamaican society.” Rastafari was a response to poverty, unemployment and cultural alienation. In addition to their economic marginalisation, the masses of the poor were all but excluded from the political process. Rastafari is rooted in the rejection of the legitimacy of the Jamaican social system and in resistance to its values and social arrangements. Most of the studies mentioned above give a broader explanation of the origins of Rastafari in Jamaica and its expansion to other parts of the world. The Rastafari lividity in South Africa developed largely based on the ideas and principles adopted from the movement of Marcus *Messiah* Garvey and Ethiopian faith and customs.

The origin of the Rastafari movement in South Africa (as elsewhere in Africa) can be linked to two important movements, Ethiopianism and, as suggested, Garveyism. The first, Ethiopianism<sup>5</sup>, is the notion that the modern state of Ethiopia fulfils a biblical prophecy of the rise of a dominant nation, Ethiopia (Chawane 2012:168). Ethiopia and Liberia are the two African nation that were never colonised by a European country (Marcus, 1994). It represents the homeland for Africans who are outside of the continent. Secondly, Garveyism was also not foreign to Africa and South Africa because it was the philosophy of Marcus Garvey. According to Chawane (2012:171),

Garvey can thus be regarded as an immediate contributor to an Afro-centric reading of the Bible that some breakaway churches in South Africa and Rastafarians inherited. His Afrocentric interpretation of the Bible, his Ethiopianist vision and philosophy of Blackness influenced the emerging Ethiopianism ideology and the Rastafari movement.

From the introduction of Garveyism and Ethiopianism since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until 1994, Rastafari in South Africa existed solely as a philosophy rather than an organisation or a formal movement (Chawane 2012).

The other important link to the Rastafari movement in South Africa is the ideology of Black Consciousness movement. It was a popular anti-Apartheid activist movement that emerged in 1990 which is discussed later.

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<sup>5</sup> The Zion prophecy by Marcus Garvey and Psalm 87 indicate the importance of Ethiopia in their view.

## **2.7 Rastafari Movement and Black Consciousness Movement**

The Rastafari movement emerged under harsh conditions of power and frustration. Black Jamaican people developed and led the Rastafari movement, which in itself is a form of black thought and consciousness. During the formation of Rastafari, as explained by Price (2009), it was dominated by black people because of the conditions of poverty that were racialised in Jamaica. These harsh racialised condition was similar to the conditions in South Africa.

The 1971 Policy Manifesto of the South African Students' Organisation<sup>6</sup> (SASO) defines Black Consciousness as "an attitude of mind, a way of life whose basic tenet is that the Black must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of birth and reduce his basic human dignity". The concept of Black Consciousness therefore implies an awareness and pride in their blackness by Black people and contends that they should and must appreciate their value as human beings. The study argues that the revolutionary narratives of black experiences, resilience and resistance towards white supremacy brought about unity, collective development and identity among themselves. The notion of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa can be tied up with the emergence of Black Consciousness, black identity and power around the world. The study also demonstrates Marcus Garvey's contribution towards Black Consciousness in general, and Black Consciousness in South Africa.

It is largely due to Marcus Garvey's teachings and activism on black repatriation from the diaspora back to Africa that the Black Consciousness movement was triggered. Rastafari has incorporated some of the elements of Black Consciousness in its culture. That is, to embrace and to be aware of the importance of blackness, their own systems and cultural values.

Black Consciousness promoted notions such as: black is beautiful, black identity and black pride. It borrowed much from the Negritude African perspective which played a role in the pre-independence political struggles in Africa. According to Snail (2009:55) "the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa grew out of the tension and suspicion between the oppressed people which eventually led to unity". At the time, Black Consciousness

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<sup>6</sup> South African Students' Organisation: SASO policy manifesto - 1971

was used to refer to black people excluding coloured and Indian people. According to More (2008:55):

In Steve Biko's<sup>7</sup> definition, Black Consciousness was thus synonymous with an "inward looking process," through which blackness had to be practiced in order to be realised. Accordingly, blackness accrued the qualities of the processual, historical, and performed. Biko thus severed blackness (and race in general) from its a-historical determination as an inherent biological essence. Rejecting the essentialist racial differentiations that apartheid was constructed upon, Black Consciousness forwarded an understanding of blackness attuned to its own historical construction as an emancipatory politics.

One could say that Rastafari is a Black Consciousness Movement based on the resistance towards Babylon by promoting black identity. It is suggested that the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, like Rastafari, emerged from social frustration and social inequality. Black Consciousness arose in the midst of jailing, exiling and killing of freedom fighters or black anti-apartheid leaders during the apartheid government More (2008).

The Black Consciousness Movement was a revolutionary movement that exerted major influence globally. It was fostered by black people who fought for liberation in their countries. It also encouraged pride in being black (Snail 2009). However, the Rastafari movement was more complex in questioning the black identity concept and whether or not Rastafari is only for Black people (Price 2009). Rastafari identity also promotes aspects of Black identity incorporating the many challenges and struggles of Black people in general. As time has moved on, the concept of Black Consciousness has been challenged by scholars as an attitude or a state of mind rather than the skin colour of a person. This is evident in the Rastafari movement which accommodates people other than Black, too. There are White and Asian Rastas, but some African Rastas dispute the idea of Rastas who are not Black. According to Price (2009) black identity has been socially constructed and assigned to people, but assignment of an identity does not necessarily mean that it will be accepted or that it will be interpreted as the inscribers intended; however, categorisations and prescriptions can influence people's self-perception. Therefore "being and becoming Black" involves mutual commitment between the ascribed category and the personal awareness of blackness.

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<sup>7</sup> Steve Biko was an anti-Apartheid Activist in the 1960s and 1970s.

## 2.8 Rastafari as Transnational Movement

As mentioned before, Rastafari as a social phenomenon spread globally. Transnationalism, as defined by Charles (1992), is a process by which migrants through their daily life activities create social fields that cross national boundaries. It refers to multiple ties and institutes across the borders of national states. On the other hand, Al-Ali and Koser (2002:1-14) warn [that] “there is little doubt that the term transnationalism is currently en vogue, and that as a result, it has been overused and misused, and furthermore, often used without conceptual or definitional clarity.” From an anthropological perspective transnationalism refers to the spread of identity and cultural models and transnational space. According to Charles (1992:101),

Transnationalism allows an understanding of migrants as no longer caught in the trap between either assimilation or nostalgia and the ‘myth of return’. Rather, it is argued, migrants are more and more able to construct their lives across borders, creating economic, social, political and cultural activities which allow them to maintain membership in both their immigration country and their country of origin.

The central argument is that transnationalism results from a combination of mobility and locality within a state. It comes into being through the cultural flows which are adapted and reinterpreted throughout the years. In relations to Rastafari, Charles (1992) interpretation narrates migrants who at this point is an individual moving from a specific culture into Rastafari movement. The Rastafari movement is a transnational one because of the cultural flows that have a significant impact among different societies (Hansing 2001). Bilby (1983) and Chevannes (1998) attribute the Rastafari internationalisation to three main factors: 1) the large number of Jamaicans who migrated to Great Britain and North America, some of whom took the Rasta message with them, while others became Rastas in their host countries; 2) the emergence of reggae music on the international pop music scene and its subsequent world-wide success; and 3) the effort on the part of Rastafari elders to travel outside Jamaica to promote Rasta teaching and livity. Moreover, Rastafari livity was promoted by telecommunication, the internet, videos and radios.

Scholars such as Bilby (1983), Charles (1992), Hansing (2001) and Salter (2008) reveal the transnational journey of the Rastafari movement and cultural flows within the different societies of the world. Through the transnational journey, the Rastafari movement lost its original territory and became a journeying culture. According to Hansing (2001:745) “Rastafari

is continuously being appropriated and reinterpreted by different peoples in different ways, which has resulted in the ongoing emergence of new localized expressions of the movement.” The cultural flows and images of Rastafari livity were either adapted as a fashion or part of a culture.

According to Cohen and Kennedy (2000:89) “on balance, nation-state are not withering, but rather undergoing a transformation in their structures and processes, which implies the modification of their institutional forms and their policies by transnational forces.” All transnational movements adapt to the local context; Rastafari livity also did not reach South Africa in its original form because of reinterpretations and localisation. Through transnationalism, different countries come across as a new culture, which, by means of ideas, music or symbolism, individuals adopt as a new lifestyle, religion or fashion; in this case, Rastafari livity. Over time individuals from across nation-state construct their lives based on the influences around them. It is vital to understand that many Rastafari adherents around the world have their own ways of defining the movement. Rastafari livity is an on-going process undertaken by different people regardless of age, race and gender.

Throughout history, however, many have claimed that Rastafari movement is a patriarchal order with only a minority of women involved. Many of the women join the movement through marriage making them subordinates to the broader Rastafari movement. The role of women, as described in the literature, is discussed in the following section.

## **2.9 Women in Society**

In many societies, women are regarded as subordinates and second class citizens in relation to their male counterparts (Sultana 2010). According to the Cobuild (2010:1559) “subordination means, something else is less important than the other thing”. Thus, women’s subordination refers to a situation, where a power relationship exists and men dominate women. Scholars such as Allanana (2013) Goody (1982) and Khan (2008) discuss women’s social and economic status around the world. It is known that the world is patriarchal by nature, in which religious or cultural belief systems, the law and employment have subordinate places for women. This section focuses on Muslim and Rastafari women to understand their perception and how they situate themselves within a patriarchal order. It is necessary to explore the non-Rastafari women to better understand the world at large. Various questions have been asked regarding:

What are the roles and responsibilities of women in societies? How do religious and cultural belief systems allocate spaces for women? How do women orient themselves in society? What are the gender norms that restrict women from engaging in certain activities? The section argues that religious and cultural systems create gendered spaces, which marginalise women and give men leadership positions in society.

Women's lives, unlike men's, are usually centred on the home and they are excluded from participation in broader society (Allanana 2013). The word woman is also affiliated with nurture, mother and care taker (Khan 2008), thus being closely related to domestic areas. This domestic affiliation includes taking care of the children and household duties. As Goody (1982:263) notes: "[w]omen have been the most exploited within households and communities in terms of their labour, household chores and responsibilities". From this perspective, men are active and women are passive in all social spaces based on gendered responsibilities.

Allanana (2013), Lake (1998b) and Sultana (2010), investigate patriarchy, gender inequalities and women's subordination. These researchers focus on patriarchy and the different gender inequalities in society. According to (Sultana 2010:2), "patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres" while Walby (1990:20) defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". The word "patriarchy" has been reinvented in the past two decades to analyse the origins and conditions of men's oppression of women (Kamarae 1992).

The creation of patriarchal concepts, according to Lerner (1993:3), was built into all mental constructs of societies and remained invisible over the centuries. However, the notion of patriarchy in societies can easily be contested. As many societies have been historically patriarchal; but not all were always so such as Queen Modjadji<sup>8</sup> people. However, the impact of the Tartar invaders in Europe seems to have had a significantly deleterious effect on the place of western women of and at that time and since then.

These concepts projected men as whole and powerful and females as deviant, incomplete, physically mutilated and emotionally dependent. This understanding was founded on the perception that men and women were created differently, and therefore their biology, respective needs, capacities and functions are not the same (Lerner 1993:4).

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<sup>8</sup> Queen Modjadji is the hereditary queen of Balobedu, a people of the Limpopo Province of South Africa



The gender roles differ from place to place, and alter over time. This simply means that what might have been confined to being a man's duty, women can also do. For instance, some occupations such as construction, bus or taxi driving are closely associated with the notion of being men's jobs. However, women can also perform such tasks. In the Rastafari case, women regard their duties as holy because a man cannot succeed without them. Women play a supportive role whilst men play a leading one within the Rastafari livity. The holy books are favourable towards men and make some practices seem oppressive towards women.

## **2.10 Women in Rastafari Livity**

Women in the Rastafari movement are no different to women around the world who are defined as second class citizens and subordinate to their male counterparts (Sultana 2010). There is, however, minimal literature on women in Rastafari livity. This section focuses on academic publications and grey sources that provide little information on Rastafari women, rather interrogating what their roles and responsibilities in Rastafari livity are. This livity is patriarchal in nature with few women in the movement (Barnett 2012). Scholars such as Critsimilios (2009) Khan (2008) and MacFarlane (2008) focus on women in Rastafari livity. Thus, my central arguments are a) the holy books are guidance for their lifestyle d) women are marginalised within a patriarchal order that accommodates them in different ways c) women have experiences and orient themselves within Rastafari livity.

The role of women in Rastafari livity is very complex since, as mentioned, the Rastafari religion is patriarchal (Hansing 2005). The position of women refers specifically to the distinctive gendered responsibilities between men and women. As indicated, the women's position is centred in the kitchen, church and children. The kitchen implies home duties, taking care of the domestic household responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning. The church recommends women to be supportive to their male counterparts and to ensure the temple area is well organised. Lastly, as regards children, women are caregivers whose key responsibility is in disciplining and nurturing their children.

Rowe (1998), Tafari-Ama (1998) and Hansing (2005) analyse the notion of patriarchy within the Rastafari movement and also how women orient themselves within the order. As Barnett (2012:78) writes,

There can be no denying the fact that RastafarI<sup>9</sup> is a patriarchal movement. The male is at the head, having responsibility for conducting rituals, for interpreting events of significance to the

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<sup>9</sup> RastafarI refers to the adherents of Rastafari which is spelled with the I at the end

community, and for the care and protection of the family as well as the community. Rastafari is based on the Bible; it therefore follows that its structure in philosophy would pattern that which unfolds in the Bible.

Women in Rastafari orient themselves by following the life teaching of Empress Menen, who was His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I's wife, also called Queen Omega. She is worshiped as the Mother of Creation and is a strong role model for Rasta women as a proponent of the education of women, charity work (Lake 1998a).

Jahug (1992:37) describes the title of Queen Omega as follows:

Queen Omega, the Ethiopian woman is the crown woman of this world. She hands us the rule book from the poles of Supreme Authority. She is the Canon Mistress of our creation, King Alpha [Haile Selassie] and Queen Omega are the paymasters of the world. Queen Omega being the blaming mistress of many worlds, she charges the powerhouse right now.

As the above statement suggests, women are regarded as strong and to be respected. Women in Rastafari regard Empress Menen as their role model who challenged oppression and was the powerhouse<sup>10</sup> of Rastafari. However, as much as women rule the domestic sphere they are regarded as oppressed within the public sphere. Whilst, outside the home women are identified by the veil or headwrap (in the case of Rastafari) which is seen as a source of empowerment and cultural affirmation. According to Hoodfar (1991) veiling has become an instrument through which women publicly dissociate themselves from some of the culturally disapproved traits and characteristics attributed to the stereotype of the modern woman. At the same time, veiling enables these women to safeguard their traditional rights. It gives them the authority to display their beliefs both in public and domestic areas.

In *The Muslim woman: The power of images and the danger of pity*, Lila Abu-Lughod makes the following argument pertaining to veiled Muslim women: "Our lives are saturated with images, images that are strangely confined to a very limited set of tropes or themes. The oppressed Muslim woman. The veiled Muslim woman. The Muslim woman who does not have the same freedoms we have. The woman ruled by her religion. The woman ruled by her men"; (Abu-Lughod 2006:1). These kinds of stereotypes have reinforced a demeaning narrative in this culture. It makes Muslim women seem oppressed, with little or no freedom of expression. However, in the real sense women have freedom of expression both within the domestic and

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<sup>10</sup> Powerhouse, refers to Empress Menen's influence in the social, economic well-being of the people

public areas. Furthermore, the above information has a relations to Rastafari women who are also painted by oppression and subordination based on their images. Both of these women are subjected to some religious manuscripts that also form the basis of their daily practices.

It is the religious systems and holy books which advocate for the position of women in society. As shown above these are often the source of gendered oppression. Tafari-Ama (1998:89) questions, “how do women remain committed to a movement where male domination is so strong?” It has been noted that gender roles within Rastafari are based on the traditional principles and the norms of the Bible. The New Testament indicates the position of women in Rastafari particularly in the church. As these particular lines (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) stipulate:

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

The practice of women in the church is to remain marginalised with leadership positions upheld by men. Women in Rastafari livity are obligated to adhere to the teaching of the Bible as the basis of their wisdom. As Lake (1998b:236) puts this, “the discourse on Rastafarian women relative to Rastafarian men is expanded by clarifying the specific religious beliefs and cultural practices which legitimate women’s subordination”. Such religious beliefs are covering of one’s body as a sign of respect, silence of women during church sermons and restriction on preparing food during menstrual cycles.

Moreover, women have authority over the domestic areas of the household whereas men have control over issues outside the home and the family. Despite the fact that women exercise authority over the household, men are still regarded as the head and leader of the home. In this case, women remain subordinate to their male counterparts and men are required to have domination over all aspects of the home. The women in the Rastafari movement, as noted, play a very subordinate role within the movement. Rowe (1998) views women’s position in Rastafari as subordinates with roles was established long before they joined the movement. She argues that Rastafarian male-female relationships in the early years of the movement were rooted in a desire to clarify the male-female role in a manner consistent with the male perception of an intrinsic maleness. She claims the position of women was fashioned by men which gave them an advantage over women.

There are obligatory rules within the Rastafari movement which ensure that women will not leave their domestic role. The rules perpetuate women's marginalisation and inferiority within the movement. Two examples of the rules are preaching in the church and smoking in public areas. The exclusion of women from this practice not only shows how they are viewed as inferior, but it also undercuts their involvement with the Rastafari faith in general. It is almost as if they are not true members because they are not allowed to take part in the key practices and rituals (Chevannes 1998:256). For Hansing (2005:34) "[r]esearch shows that Rastafarian women, in fact, appreciate the gender norms, values and importance which are placed on their roles as women and their work in domestic spheres". Furthermore, the role of women is significant within Rastafari despite men holding more powerful positions. This is due to the fact that even though the roles marginalise and make women inferior to men, some women still appreciate and do not feel oppressed by the rules (Hansing 2005).

Critsimilios (2009), Greville (1998) and Lake (1998b), maintain that the Rastafari movement or livity, gives scant attention to women but rather focuses on men. These scholars specify the absence of women in leadership positions and proscriptions on ways of dressing. These demonstrate that the position of women in domestic areas is stronger than their public roles. Lake (1998b:240) observes, "strict Biblical interpretations and other cultural beliefs that constitute Rastafarian ideology work to further institutionalize their subordinate status." It is evident that the religious ideology and teaching of the Bible create space for women to be subordinate to men, to place women solely in domestic areas and assign lesser positions for them.

Hansing's (2005) standpoint is that the position of the woman is to be respectful and submissive to her husband. The key position for women in Rastafari livity is to follow the footprints of Empress Menen. Her responsibility was to be a caretaker of the family, community and also to be the Queen serving beside her Kingman. However, the position of women is subject to change as women in Rastafari livity are becoming more conscious.

It is an obligation for Rastafari women to keep their moral commitment to the teachings and principles of Empress of Menen Asfaw (Walker 2012), which preaches on the following:

- To put prayer and *Ises* first in life. To pray regularly and always be conscious of Jah within and all around, in others and in the natural world.
- Be faithful to Jah and keep the Holy Laws and Commandments of Israel, no matter what misfortune, trial and tribulation in life.

- Be a patroness of the Tabernacle to ensure it is kept clean, beautified and well-furnished for its priests and congregation.
- Be dutiful, loyal, hardworking, respectful, loving and kind in all roles in life: as daughter, mother, sister, wife, queen, nun or any political or social leadership.
- Fully support and stand by the Kingman, defending and protecting one's property.
- Being knowledgeable, skilful and wise enough to take on his roles or work in his absence, and to assist and strengthen him in all tasks and struggles as Head of the house.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

The reviewed material above indicates that the subject of Rastafari livity has been studied and presented in different contexts by scholars around the world. This study draws on the subject of Rastafari movement as the central term. It showed the literature reviews which pay particular attention to issues of the Rastafari movement. Most importantly, it established a large body of literature on its history and emergence in the Caribbean island of Jamaica. This literature established that Rastafari is a revitalisation entity. It deals with creating a new life from prior traumatic experiences to generate a sustainable environment. However, there is very little literature that focuses on the establishment and the conditions of Rastafari livity in the township of Tshwane. Thus, further qualitative and quantitative studies is required to fully comprehend the gender roles there. The following chapter deals with the establishment and origin of Rastafari in Tshwane.

## **Chapter Three: Rastafari Orders and Reggae music**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the origins of the Rastafari movement in the townships of Tshwane with the objective of investigating the relationship that exists between the social conditions, unemployment in an underprivileged society and the spread of Rastafari livity in this city. This chapter concentrates on the history of Tshwane and the conditions which were found to contribute to the emergence of Rastafari livity.

This chapter is a result of research of primary and secondary sources concerning the Rastafari in Tshwane. It provides an understanding of South Africa's peculiar spatial setting, paying particular attention to the geographical structure of the City of Tshwane and furthermore provides important information on the establishment of the townships there. An understanding of the social conditions of the townships will assist in establishing the interests of the adherents of Rastafari livity in Tshwane.

### **3.2 City of Tshwane**

The City of Tshwane in the Gauteng Province of South Africa is a metropolitan municipality occupied by diverse social groups. This city has a unique history that differs markedly from other capital cities in the country. According to Mabin (2015:29),

South Africa has multiple national capitals. The largest arm of the government -the executive and administration- is seated in Pretoria whose municipal authority has adopted the name City of Tshwane since the regime change of 1994. Founded in 1855, the city now has 3 million inhabitants: it is also part of a much larger 'city region', including Johannesburg, with a population over 12 million, concentrating the major part of economic power in the country.

The City of Tshwane<sup>11</sup> has a history of racial segregation. During the Apartheid regime the Pretoria city was identified as a 'civil servant town'; the headquarters for all the government offices were situated there. The African population was dependent on the government. The

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<sup>11</sup> City Of Tshwane refers to a bigger entity than Pretoria

area was strongly pro-government; a pro-Verwoerd<sup>12</sup> enclave that supported extreme Afrikaner<sup>13</sup> nationalism (Joffe 2007:21). Most obviously, at that time Pretoria was under Apartheid rule and dominated by mostly by White people with very few Africans working within the city centre. Today, the City of Tshwane is still the administrative capital of South Africa.

The City of Tshwane Central Business District (CBD) is the focal point that unites and brings together the people from various townships, serving as an economic harbour for its diverse population. The city is diverse in nature, comprising a population of Africans citizens and of foreign nationals, Whites, Coloureds and Indians. It also includes Rastafari adherents who either settle within the city or surrounding townships or settlements. There are Rastafari stores selling art works, hair products, clothes and jewellery amongst the many commercial stores. Most of the adherents commute from the townships to the city for employment purposes. The townships surrounding Tshwane are home to many people.

### **3.3 Tshwane townships and Rastafari livity**

My fieldwork took place in the Tshwane township areas which are an important foundation for Rastafari livity in South Africa. Thus, it is impossible to talk about Rastafari without mentioning these. According to Bond (2000:4), “a township is the land formally allocated to hosting the site of a town; the word township legally refers to both residential and industrial sites”.

The term township also signifies a location, a term that refers to underdeveloped urban living areas which were reserved for Indian, Coloured and African<sup>14</sup> people. The townships’ spatial planning developed as a result of the Apartheid regime which allocated residential areas for Africans as a result of the policies and Group Area Act of 1950 under the said regime. This Act also assigned racial and ethnic groups to different business sections in urban areas. In this way, interaction was restricted and legally controlled. Interaction was inevitable and all had some form of interaction. The geographical locality of townships in Tshwane is to the East, North and West of the city. Different ethnic groups were allocated to different townships. For

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<sup>12</sup> Verwoerd refers to the racial policies of apartheid masterminded by Hendrick Verwoerd.

<sup>13</sup> Afrikaner refers to an Afrikaans-speaking white person in South Africa, especially one descended from the Dutch and Huguenot settlers of the 17th century.

<sup>14</sup> Blacks and Africans terms are used interchanging for the purpose of the study

instance, the area known as Eersterust is predominantly inhabited by Coloured people. Laudium, to the southwest of Pretoria, is predominantly inhabited by an Indian population. In the West and North of Tshwane are the townships of Mamelodi, Atteridgeville and Soshanguve which are populated by the Black people (City of Tshwane. Section 14 manual. Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000).

Under the previous regime, the townships, as mentioned above, were also referred to as 'locations' and *lokasies* (Afrikaans). The current slang name used is *Kasi* and other local names which refer to the smaller townships. The Rastafari adherents of Tshwane live in diverse townships. Section 3.4 below (Figure 1) includes a map indicating the geographical location of where Rastafarians who participated in my study, live (indicated by square dots on the map).

### 3.4 Map of Tshwane showing where Rastafari participants live



Figure 1: Map 1: Map of Tshwane Source: (Tshwane Map 2016)

<https://www.google.co.za/maps/@25.4957043,26.5112731,7.25z>

The squared dotted area are the locations of the participants.



### 3.5 Rastafari Orders in Tshwane

Rastafari orders in Tshwane are reflective of the orders that exist worldwide. The dominant one in Tshwane is the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but in order to locate the study I describe each of these orders. The Nyabbinghi, Bobo Ashanti and Melchizedek orders differ in terms of their beliefs, symbols, livity and churchical ritual practices. However, all the orders hail His Majesty Haile Selassie, reject Eurocentrism and embrace African identities. The orders are also similar in that they believe that ganja is a sacred herb and follow some of the teachings of the Bible.

It is fundamental to understand the origin of the orders and the purposes these serve in a broader Rastafari livity. Therefore, answers to questions such as when, how, where and to the roles of Rastafari adherents within the movement are provided. The study investigated how power is maintained within the orders: Are they patriarchal? Do they have social activities and gatherings in townships? The Rastafari orders demonstrate some differences but fall under one movement, which established that they display more similarities than differences.

When interviewed, Sister Vonne stated:

I chant Bhingi I'm a Bhingi woman. The houses are not a complex issue, the Twelve Tribes deal with priesthood, Nyabbinghi is the umbrella, Bobo and everything else come after the Twelve Tribes and Bhingi. Those are just different houses of Jah, different houses but there is nothing different about us. We chant Bhingi which is heartbeat, instruments, shakers, drums are the same. We all hail Jah when we say Jah Rastafari we understand what it means. We are very common so if now we say Bobo, Bhingi or Twelve Tribes there will never be law and order.

#### 3.5.1. The Nyabbinghi Order

By 2012 there were three Rastafari denominations in South Africa (Chawane 2012). Following the international trend, these denominations are the Nyabbinghi itself, the Twelve Tribes of Israel and Bobo Ashanti.

While the Rastafari adherents of Tshwane are familiar with the Nyabbinghi Order, many of the adherents are of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but chant Nyabbinghi, which is also recognised as the oldest order, known as 'The House of Fire' in Rastafari. According to Chawane (2012:177) "[w]hen Rastafarianism emerged in South Africa it was in the form of the Nyabbinghi Order". Due to transnationalism, many people who adopted Rastafari did so in the

form of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. In the Tshwane townships many took to Rastafari in this form instead of the Nyabbinghi order. The main reason is because the Twelve Tribes of Israel is considered to be the most liberal of the Rastafari orders. According to Jah Rootman (2012), most of the Rastafarians followed in the steps of Bob Marley who belonged to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Based on the many interviews with Rastafari adherents of Tshwane, the said Order was prominent because they were believed to be the descendants of the twelve sons of Israel.

The Nyabbinghi Orders, also known as Haile Selassie I Theocratical Order, was named after Queen Nyabbinghi of Uganda, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Ugandan ruler who fought against the British Empire. The Nyabbinghi Order respects Ethiopia and promotes all symbols such as the colours, the flags and iconographies. The House of the Nyabbinghi Order is founded on the following religious rights: As stated in the Constitution of Nyabbinghi (Chawane 2012):

1. It shall abide by the Bible (King James Version), Holy Piby, all teachings and speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I.
2. The first Saturday of every month shall be the official day of worship for all houses.
3. The holy herb (marijuana) shall be used at all gatherings of Nyabbinghi Holy sessions.
4. No youth (under 18) shall be permitted to smoke ganja unless used in another form with parental supervision.
5. All members must be married especially the Priesthood and those who live with the Queen.
6. Members of the Nyabbinghi shall not be persecuted or discriminated against for wearing dreadlocks, as it is a holy vow.
7. No polygamy is allowed in the House of Nyabbinghi Order.
8. No fornication is allowed.

The Nyabbinghi order introduced the above constitutions which are not kept to by other orders; hence this order displays minor differences from the rest of the Rastafari orders. In the interviews with Rastafari women it was highlighted that all Rastafari orders chant Bhingi, which is the umbrella and foundation of all Rastafari orders.

### 3.5.2. The Twelve Tribes of Israel

According to the *Jamaican Observer* (n.d), the Twelve Tribes of Israel order was formed in 1968 by Vernon Carrington. The order believes in a horoscope prophecy<sup>15</sup>; one of the most famous adherents of the Twelve Tribes of Israel was Bob Marley, who also promoted Rastafari

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<sup>15</sup> *Horoscope prophecy refers to the sons of Jacob, based on their birth month, all the members are assigned to a tribe and associated with a certain characteristic:*

through reggae music. They follow the teachings of His Majesty, follow the strict diet *ital* and utilise the holy herb for meditation and relaxation purposes too.

### 3.5.3. Bobo Ashanti Order

The Bobo Ashanti, also known as Dread, has few followers. According to The Rastafarian Orders (n.d) the word Bobo stands for black while Ashanti is derived from the name of an African tribe from Kumasi, Ghana. Bobo Ashanti are known as the *Priestical* House of Rastafari, also called EABIC (Ethiopian Africa Black International Congress/Church of Salvation). Prince Emmanuel Charles Edward in Jamaica founded the Bobo Ashanti Order in the 1950s. It also declares Prince Emmanuel to be the reincarnation of the Christ who is also referred to as the Black Christ and High Priest. Haile Selassie is regarded as King or God, Marcus Garvey is considered to be a prophet and Prince Emmanuel, as High Priest. The three are regarded as part of the Trinity within Rastafari (The Rastafarian Orders n.d).

The Bobo Ashanti, as another order, have their particular way of life as compared to the other orders. According to Tafari-Ama (1998) the Bobo Ashanti is organised in terms of gender differentiation, very strict and typecast into the orders of Rastafari. In an ethnographic study documenting Priest Emmanuel's eighteen life history, C.A Newland's (1994) notes, "perhaps one of the most controversial of all the principles of livity... of the ancient Judaic principle overning the separation of man from woman [or....woman from the rest of the congregation] at the time of their menstrual flow.

The Bobo Ashanti and the Melchizedek Orders are still in a developmental stage in Tshwane.

### 3.5.4. Melchizedek Order

The last order among Rastafari livity is known as the Melchizedek Order which is also very minimally represented in Tshwane. The word Melchizedek means the 'Prince of Salem' or 'Prince of Peace'. Rastafari of this order also believe in covering their heads with turbans but wear black instead of white robes; white robes are prominent among the Twelve Tribes of Israel and Nyabinghi Orders. Members of the other houses see the Melchizedek as emerging out of the desire by its membership solely to be able to practise polygamy and for no other reason. As per research conducted by Chawane (2008) the priest of the House of Fire (Melchizedek Order) they differ from other orders in that:

They chant with seven queens, especially the priests. They have official priests (and) have been baptised by being dipped into the water of any river. All members should also be baptised by water in the river. Most important about this new Movement is that they declared themselves as a religious movement unlike the other two who see theirs as a way of life (Interview, Monty, 04<sup>th</sup> January 2004. (Chawane 2008:99)

The Melchizedek Order is still emerging in South Africa and most of the Rastafari adherents did not have more knowledge about it than is given here.

### 3.5.5. Relationship between Orders

Without being able to rely on any official census, it is estimated that there are over a thousand Rastafari adherents in Tshwane. According to my observations, the Rastafari orders of Nyabbinghi and Twelve Tribes of Israel usually gather in Tshwane. Although the Bobo Ashanti gather with them, the Bobo Ashanti usually hold their gatherings in Johannesburg. Rastafari adherents gather under the same umbrella and do not discriminate between the different orders. When one attends a different order, the visitors have to abide by the proceedings of the host order. The Rastafari orders coexist and have an outstandingly harmonious relationship despite the differences.

It should be noted that Rastafari adherents alone know these different orders and that members of society cannot differentiate between members of various orders. There are five similarities among the Rastafari orders. Firstly, they all proclaim they are Rastas. Secondly, they believe in Jah or God, thirdly they wear their hair in dreadlocks, fourthly they follow a strict *ital* diet and lastly, they follow some of the teachings of the Bible.

The greatest difference between the orders is that the Nyabbinghi considers Marcus Garvey as the prophet of Rastafari, who prophesied the return of Haile Selassie and preached Black Consciousness messages. On the other hand, Emmanuel is the most important High Priest for the Bobo Ashanti. King Haile Selassie is considered King and God by other Rastas. The women within the orders are the same but differ in terms of head wraps or turban and *churchical* ritual performances. The Bobo Ashanti women wear a long cloth covering their head that goes down to their waist. The Twelve Tribes of Israel and Nyabbinghi tie their dreadlocks upward or in a ponytail and wrap with a cloth. Bobo Ashanti do not smoke during the sermon. On the other hand, Nyabbinghi and the Twelve Tribes of Israel smoke as part of the belief system.

### 3.6 The spread of Rastafari Livity in South Africa

There is a lack of literature concerning the establishment of Rastafari livity in South Africa and how it spread to other parts of the country and in the various townships. There is no documented history in this respect. However, it is known that through reggae many South Africans were introduced to Rastafari livity. According to Oosthuizen (1990) the latter became known and was described in journal articles that indicate the Rastafari livity and influenced research across the country.

Rastafari livity in South Africa was spread through reggae music which preached about social issues around the world. According to Johnson-Hill (1995:39), “the large-scale transfer of Rastafarianism from Jamaica to South Africa, as in other parts of the world, was caused largely by reggae music, which preached Garveyism and Ethiopianism, the bedrock of the Rastafarian movement.” Of the early stages of the movement in Cape Town, Papa Sam (one of the Rastafarian elders) says that because there were not many Rastafarians or reading materials then, reggae was the main source of information. Such music also became popular amongst freedom fighters<sup>16</sup> including those in exile and the township youth (Chawane 2008). Reggae music attracted anyone who wanted to advocate for the change and transformation conveyed by the music.

According to Oosthuizen (1990:14) “the visit by both reggae superstars, Peter Tosh and Bob Marley to Southern Africa in the early eighties contributed to the spread of Rastafarianism in South Africa.” Peter Tosh had the opportunity to perform in Swaziland during Christmas of 1983. Bob Marley performed at the independence celebration of Zimbabwe on 17 April 1980. These two visits contributed greatly towards drawing the attention of youth in Southern Africa to the movement. Unfortunately, there is little literature following up on how reggae music facilitated the spread of Rastafari livity in South Africa.

According to Oosthuizen (1990) reggae music in the township areas had a major impact among the lives of the elders and the youth. It is important to note that reggae music was very powerful because of its effectiveness in areas of high illiteracy. The reggae artists used music to communicate and protest about social situations around the world. As Chesebro *et al*

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Freedom fighter’ refers to a person who takes part in a revolutionary struggle to achieve a political goal, especially in order to overthrow their government. It also refers to the people who fought against the apartheid regime.

(1985:115-135) observe, “as a reaction to injustices, protest music is a vehicle for musical artists to identify an antagonist, the source that is to be blamed for suffering, and offer solutions to escape from problems in the existing social order”. The reggae artists such as Bob Marley and the Wailers, Lucky Dube and Jimmy Cliff conveyed the message of Rastafari through symbolism, rainbow colours, dreadlocks and Patwah or *Dread* talk which is frequently used within Rastafari livity.

In South Africa, reggae music was an art, an instrument of consciousness and resistance. By 1994 some Black people embraced wearing their hair in dreadlocks, celebrated the Rastafari colours and took these as a fashion style. From this year Rastafari livity was nationally acknowledged. Rastafari has been in the public domain since the 1970s (Oosthuizen 1990). The Rastafari movement grew to become popular not only amongst the African youths but adults too. Rastafari livity grew in membership, accommodating students, youth, adults and diverse ethnic groups, after 1994. Some Rastafari professionals in South Africa Rastafari include Gareth Prince, an attorney, Ras Afro and Ras Mantula, Advocates, and Ras Blackroots, a medical doctor (Weavind 2012).

The Rastafari movement has spread around Southern Africa where it continues to have a great impact on the lives of young people. There is the establishment of the Rastafari United Front<sup>17</sup>(RUF) which aims to unite Rastas in Africa. In an interview with the founder of the RUF he explained that it is registered with the Department of Social Development as an NGO. It aims to spread and unite Rastafarians around Africa.

Some of its objectives are as follows:

- RUF brings knowledge among the nations about the movement. This country only contains a 1% proportion of Rastas. Therefore, RUF advocates the philosophy of Rastafari.
- Establish Rastafari schools, developmental structures, hospitals and gardens for homes and receive funding from the state.
- Address issues of police and public brutality.
- To promote the Rastafari history of South Africa

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<sup>17</sup> Rastafari United Front is a NPO established during the Rastafari National Summit at Wits University 2014 to rally and unite Rastafari Family in Azania.

- To establish the Rastafari front in the whole of Africa.

The RUF has provincial branches, for example in the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Western Cape and Gauteng. Each township has a group which represents their area, like the Mamelodi, Eersterus and Soshanguve dynasties. The Rastafari leaders are appointed collectively by the branch. Many of the leaders are Rastafari who are academics, self-employed and or are committed members of Rastafari.

### **3.7 The Spread of Rastafari Livity in Tshwane**

Rastafari livity has left a mark within the townships of Tshwane. These townships followed more or less similar trends to others in South Africa concerning the emergence of the Rastafari livity. Before 1994, Rastafari adherents in Tshwane did not belong to any organised movement. However, after 1997 Rastafari was formalised into an organisation (Chawane 2012). The direct formalisation of Rastafari was a result of many attempts by adherents to constitute Rastafari. Elders of Rastafari in Cape Town formed their own communities in the hope of being recognised as a formal movement. Thus, the emergence of the movement in South Africa was a direct result of the fall of the Apartheid regime, with the year 1994 marking a turning point for followers. The dawn of a new South Africa stimulated a desire to constitute a formal organisation (Chawane 2012). The emergence of Rastafari in Tshwane townships can be traced through the influence of reggae music, social gatherings and Rastafari symbolism.

### **3.8 Population of Rastafari Adherents in Tshwane**

According to Statistics South Africa (2016) from the 2011 Census data, the City of Tshwane is home to approximately 2,9 million people. Tshwane's population is predominantly African, representing 2,2 million people, followed by a White population of approximately 600 000 people, 59 166 Coloured individuals and 51 547 Asian individuals. A large number of the African population are residents in township areas around Tshwane. Like many other townships in South Africa, Tshwane is home to diverse religious groups ranging from Islam, Christianity, to African traditional belief as well as the Rastafari with very few followers.

Rastafari adherents are not confined to a particular section of any township but are spread all over. It is the union of Rastafari livity that brings them together through gatherings, occasions or ceremonies. The number of Rastafari adherents in South Africa is unknown since there are

no census. However, Rastafari is known to have a large percentage of men with few women, children and youth within the movement. Many of the adherents are scattered around Tshwane with the majority of men working away from the home. The women mostly occupy the home space either as stay-at-home mothers or self-employed entrepreneurs. A non-academic publication about the rise of Rastafari in South Africa is by Jah Rootsman (2012) who gives an in-depth explanation. He also focuses on how it emerged and spread throughout Tshwane. Most importantly, he pays particular attention to how women came into Rastafari.

### **3.9 Jah Rootsman's History**

The history of the Rastafari movement in South African township is best described by Jah Rootsman<sup>18</sup>, a Rastafari man who is a Dub poet and musician who writes on issues concerning Rastafari adherents in South Africa. Some Rastafarians may find this assertion unpalatable but the Rastafari Movement of South Africa, has always been driven and trail blazed by the elders and idren from Mamelodi in Gauteng and its surrounding neighbours from Eersterus to Atteridgeville ( Jah Rootsman 2012:5). Therefore, the emerging tale of Rastafari begins in the east of Pretoria, spreading to other townships. It was in the late 1960s that reggae music travelled to the townships areas of Tshwane. Many of the people were enthused by the lyrical music and the message it delivered. According to Jah Rootsman (2012:2),

During the late 1960s, the sound of Desmond Dekker with his "It Mek", "Shanty Town" and "Israelites" appeared as an initiation on the musical landscape of South Africa, followed by Burning Spears 'Garvey's Ghost' in 1975; which established what was to become the advent of Reggae in South Africa.

Moreover, the idea of Rastafari reggae explores the deep resonances and thematic connections between African people. It means that the music was mainly transported by Africans which had a tremendous impact among other Africans around the country. Despite the separation of geographic, historical, cultural, religious and textual formations, this shows the spread of reggae is linked to the establishment of Rastafari livity in Tshwane. Jah Rootsman explains the possible spread of Rastafari was through gatherings such as Dubs and *I ses*. Dubs celebrations became a means of interaction among the Rastafari adherents in the area of Tshwane. Jah Rootsman (2012:6) elaborates:

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<sup>18</sup> Jah Rootsman is the adopted or stage name of the Dub poet, which he prefers instead of real name and surname .



By the late 1980s the concept of '*Rub-a-Dub's*' sprang up all over the townships, where *bredren* could mingle and get to know each other for *fya* against Babylon. Dubs started as gatherings with brothers playing the latest riddim over house speakers, on then, vinyls or LPs, to which there would be skanking right throughout the night, usually. Ital would be provided by the host while *idren* would bring herb for reasoning and meditations. In the beginning, there were also no Queens except for the Queen of the host and those who were already married and brought their wives along.

The spread of Rastafari livity was also facilitated by social hangouts such as Dubs and dancehall sessions, sharing of information through books about Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey and Black Consciousness materials. Lastly, the Rastafari livity created a space for people to become rebellious in the presence of an oppressive system. The living conditions encouraged people to create a more satisfying culture for themselves. Rastafari was brought into prominence, making it a revitalisation movement. Rastafari was not only a way of life, but rather a sensation. As Jah Rootsman (2012:3) explains:

Bearing in mind Rastafari, when we started, it was not a movement but a feeling. One felt the urge rather than voluntarily submitting to it. Before then, for two decades of growth in South Africa, the African continent could only look at Rastafari in awe, amazement and admiration to have the audacity to defy the most repressive Babylon system and still develop as a movement.

In this regard, Rastafari livity was publicised through the influence of music. The other means to create recognition comprised the establishment of restaurants or social hangouts dominated by Rastas. For instance, at the end of the 1980s, Jah Rootsman owned the "Island Coffee Bar" in his hometown, Eersterus in Tshwane. It was not only a shop but an interactive place for Rastafari adherents who would hold dubs, poetry sessions and also dancehall events. Rastafari adherents came from all over to pay homage, as it was a first for this son of Rastafari (considered to be a philosopher of Rastafari). It reflected advancement of Rastafari in an era of political struggles. Due to the social conditions which affected the people these somehow created a collective group whereby they could all gather and strengthen capacities.

The promotion of Rastafari livity was also visible in the country during and after 1994. According to Jah Rootsman (2012:4), "Suddenly, within this racist, remorseless and tyrannical domination, elders like Mash aka Jah Rootsman, Carlos Djedje, Themba "Asher" Mabuza, Puppa Rico, Boetie "Judah", "Bettah mus' Come" and a very few and chosen elect; defied the system by growing their locks, becoming the forefathers of Rastafari in South Africa."

Because Rastafari had never yet occurred in a racist regime, at first Babylon (referring to the government system) did not know how to deal with Rastafari adherents. The kneejerk reaction was to harass anyone with dreadlocks, under the pretext of searching for ganja, throwing them into the police van and driving around for hours. The structure of Rastafari livity at the time was to organise, adapt and transform. It has already gone through a steady state, period of stress, cultural distortion and is now rebuilding itself.

Rastafari adherents around Tshwane townships came together through Jah Rootsman's gatherings and the two marches he organised in 1995 and 2001. In September 1995, he, with fellow elders, organised the first march of Rastafari in the country, which was attended by at least five hundred Rastafarians. The march was a peaceful march for Rastafari to be recognised by the country. Six years later, on 04 May 2001, Jah Rootsman again organised another great, and the last, march against the system and Rastafari from all over, 2000 strong, came out in support (Jah Rootsman 2012).

As per Jah Rootsman's (2012) history, it is clear that the spread of Rastafari livity in Tshwane began in Eersterus and Mamelodi. The three most important aspects achieved by the march were firstly, recognition by the state; secondly, the spread of Rastafari and thirdly, formalisation of the livity.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The City of Tshwane is a metropolitan that is occupied by diverse people. Many flock to the city for business and employment opportunities. There are also different religious groups with very few Rastafari adherents around the city. The townships of Tshwane have similar living conditions among the people. The emergence of Rastafari livity in Tshwane can be linked to Mamelodi and Eersterus Township. It spread through reggae music which played an important role in delivering the message of Rastafari.

The next chapter focuses on the livity of Rastafari adherents of Tshwane. It examines the social activities, role and involvement of Rastafari women within the movement and elaborates on the information available about Rastafari, the different orders, practices and the women's lived experience.

## **Chapter Four: Information on Rastafari livity**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the roles performed by women in Rastafari livity. It pays particular attention to Rastafari practices, doctrine, symbolism and the belief systems as they are exercised in Tshwane. The extent to which Rastafari women make strides, how they situate themselves in a patriarchal order and how they create meaning within Tshwane are examined here. The chapter is based on field observations of activities during ritual ceremonies, interviews with Rastafari adherents and Rastafari literary sources. An understanding of the general belief system will assist in comprehending the information around Rastafari orders, the relationship between them, examining whether the belief system channel only religious feelings or serve a social purpose, such as assisting Rastafari adherents to empower themselves in the country.

### **4.2 Rastafari livity**

Rastafari livity has been analysed over the years by scholars like Chawane (2012), Chevannes (1998), and Price (2009). Since its inception in Jamaica, Rastafari women have been a minority within Rastafari livity. It is a belief system that is surrounded by basic beliefs, rituals and practices, all of which excludes women.

Chawane (2008:90) writes that the three most important dates of their calendar are April 21st (the arrival date of His Majesty's three-day visit to Jamaica in 1966), July 23rd His Earth day (Birthday) in 1892, and November 2nd (His coronation of 1930). Other important celebration dates are January 7th (Ethiopian Christmas), May 25th (African Liberation Day), August 17th (Marcus Garvey's Earth day) and September 11th (Ethiopian New Year).

The Rastafarians also have an important event called '*grounation*' which plays a role in reasoning, message delivering and togetherness. The word is derived from the word 'ground', which means the place where Rastafarian gatherings take place for spiritual purposes. Chawane (2008:97) notes that *grounation* takes place in a tabernacle and is presided over by the priest.

### 4.3 Basics of Rastafari Beliefs

There is a link between Rastafari, Ethiopia and Israel that goes back to ancient times. Rastafari belief in His Majesty King Haile Selassie and the teachings that Jesus was a descendant of King David and he was black. There is a strong rejection of Babylon with the belief that Ethiopia is heaven. Some of the Rastafari practices include healthy living by observing *ital* livity and using ganja for meditation purposes.

#### 4.3.1. Jah-Rastafari and Haile Selassie

The most fundamental belief of Rastafari is in Jah, which refers to God. There are two definitions of what constitutes Jah Rastafari. Firstly, the word Jah is derived from Jehovah. Jah also refers to the Most High and the Creator. Secondly, the word Ras Tafari is the birth name of Haile Selassie. Some participants argue that Haile Selassie is not Jah but was rather a King, Messenger, Messiah or Prophet. There are different outlooks on Jah Rastafari among Rastafari adherents themselves. There is a strong belief in natural livity which is weight by the kind of food processed by Rastafari adherents.

#### 4.3.2. Rastafari and *ital* livity

The *ital* livity is an important component of all Rastafari adherents in Tshwane and around the world. *Ital* is the term for a Rastafari diet which is based on the spiritual belief and interpretation that the body is a temple and should be kept clean. Rastafari adherents in this city follow a vegan or vegetarian diet. According to Johnson-Hill (1995:25) “the practice of *I-tal* livity (vital living) amongst Rastafari adherents is reflected in their appearance, diet, use of herbs, process of reflection, modes of production, and aesthetic activity.” Most of the Rastafari adherents do not eat meat, oils, salt, smoke cigarettes or eat processed food. It is part of the Rastafari livity to maintain a healthy life. It denotes how the Rastafari men and women should conduct themselves and what they should consume as part of their culture. However, there are different orders within Rastafari livity which consume *ital* differently, as discussed below.

The Rastafari Orders of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Bobo Ashanti and Nyabbinghi all follow the *ital* livity. However, the Order of Bobo Ashanti is known to be very strict and restricts certain vegetables and fruits from its diet. According to an interview with Sister Makhada, a Bobo Ashanti follower, who explained that Bobos do not eat grapes or fruits of the

vine, pumpkin, green beans, mangoes, sugarcane and cucumbers. The reason is based on their interpretation of Biblical restrictions in regards to certain foods.

The different Rastafari orders as per their varying beliefs have disagreements with regard to consuming certain types of food. Up until now, there has been and is confusion over what Rastafari adherents should or should not eat. According to Hansing (2005:95) “*livity* is living according to the strict principles of Rastafari. *Ital* livity is thus a commitment to using things in their natural or organic states”. However, this principle is not strictly followed by some Rastafari adherents. Within Rastafari, *ital* livity requires embodying the characteristics of Haile Selassie, following in his steps and eating the kind of foods he ate. Such practices are also open to Rastafari women who in their ways follow the teaching of His Majesty Haile Selassie but associate with her majesty Queen Omega who plays a fundamental role in the livity and teachings of women.

#### 4.3.3. Rastafari and ‘the’ Holy Herb

Rastafari adherents are also known to use sacraments such as ganja or marijuana, which is popularly referred to as the holy herb or healing herb. This is closely associated with Rastafari livity. The holy herb is smoked by everyone regardless of gender or age (adults or children). Rastafari adherents believe that the holy herb is a tree of life which promotes their well-being and is often used instead of medical attention. According to Hausman (1997:61),

Rastas have created an oral mythology around the use of marijuana... The myths that are associated with the smoking of marijuana come from splinters of psalms in the Bible and from Ethiopian tales that go back to Solomon’s time as King.

The holy herb is regarded as the most significant element, especially during the church ceremony. It is evident that the holy herb or ganja is extremely important as per my first experience of a Rastafari *Iyes* or *churchical* sermon. When the chalice was lit, the Rastas would stop talking, remove their caps, and begin to pray and praise Jah. The smoke of the herb is also compared to both sharing of the communion cup and burning of incense, as this is practised in various churches. During church ceremonies in tents, the chalice would be passed around for smoking. The chalice or *Kuchie* is a pipe created specifically for ganja smoking. It is constructed from a variety of containers such as gourds and sections of bamboo or coconut. Rastafari livity justifies the use of the herb through Bible scriptures and refer to these particular

lines (Genesis 1:29) God said; Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

According to the Rastafari, there are Bible scriptures which justify the use of the holy herb. When interviewed, Sister Kamo explains that ganja, the holy herb, was given by Jah. She quotes from the Bible (King James Version) the following scriptures:

(Proverbs 15:17) Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

(Psalm 104: 14) He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth.

(Exodus 10:12) And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left.

The holy herb is a fundamental aspect for Rastafari livity which also plays a massive role during occasions. The gathering or church service makes use of the holy herb as part of the praying session. As Sister Makhada notes:

Ganja is used for different reasons, more time to service ourselves, ganja is service for me, ganja helps one to relax and can be use in different ways, ganja humbles and its medicine that heals, it's a powerful herb that people out there don't understand, we meditate with ganja and people out there don't recognize the effectiveness of ganja. The herb is important and services us women, especially to ease the menstrual pains.

According to Rastafari livity the holy herb is recognised as a herb that facilitates, strengthens and performances spirituals duties within Rastafari. According to Erskine (2005:95), "smoking the holy herb is the purest and most natural form of attaining communication with God. It is the medium of contemplation, inspiration, and insight. Smoking the herb intensifies the reasoning process and opens up new worlds of illumination, visions and enlightenment". The holy herb is similarly used among the Rastafari women and men. However, the research findings established that some women place limits on the use of the herbs whereas others do not. For instances, some women find comfort making use of the herb during pregnancy while others refuse to do so. And some women prohibit their underage children from smoking the

herb but others give permission. Some theories link the herb to the African spiritual traditions for healing and meditation purposes. The significant of usage of the holy herb is equivalent to wearing dreadlocks which cannot be divorced from one another.

#### 4.3.4. Rastafari and Dreadlocks

The Rastafari belief also entails wearing dreadlocks which are symbolic of the Lion of Judah. It is a type of hair style adapted by Rastafari men and women. This particular line (Ezekiel 44:20) states: 'Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow; they shall only poll their heads'. The practice of the hairstyles also relates to the Bible teaching concerning the Nazarites, whom the Levitical law forbade to trim their hair or shave. Rastas use this to support their practice of growing uncombed and knotted locks. Dreadlocks which are thick matted thatch of hair that are the most visible mark of Rastafari adherents. The most important purpose of dreadlocks is that there is divinity in them, which are believed to have been worn by African chiefs perhaps 6 000 years ago. (Kedebe et al. 2000).

Dreads represents an African, image natural wool and crowns of Rastafari men and women. Dreadlocks symbolise a more spiritual self-declaration, and a figurative interlocking with African ancestors. The dreadlocks symbolise unity and the commitment of Rastafari and also the defiance of Rastafari adherents against Babylon. As Fayaburn who is an elder in Rastafari (14 July 2015) explains,

Dreads is an identity of warriors, an identity of those who fight for the struggle hence the system calls us locks rebels. Locks are the way your hair should be without any regards of style. Hence you find most elders have locks even if they grow bald. The dreadlocks are an outward expression of Rastafari. They represent the natural crown and covenant with Jah.

The wearing of dreadlocks by Rastafari adherents is regarded as being in harmony with the Biblical scriptures. Another scripture notes, (Leviticus 21:5), "they shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in the flesh".

(Song of Solomon 5:2) "my head is filed with dew, and my locks with the drop of the night."  
(Song of Solomon 5:11)"his head is as the finest gold. His locks are bushy and black as a raven."

The dreadlocks are symbolic for Rastafari men and women around the world, despite having become a hairstyle that is trending within society. Rastafari men and women wear their dreadlocks differently from each other. It is expected of Rastafari women to wear a head wrap or turban to cover their dreadlocks. According to the Rastafari doctrine men can cover and uncover their dreadlocks in public whereas women keep their dreadlocks as holy and regard dreadlocks as their crown and there must always keep it covered. The main reason is that women as Queens reflect their devotion to Jah and that the covering of dreadlocks is a symbol of royalty. Women should be seen with head wraps or turbans at all times. During the Rastafari church service men take off their turban as a sign of respect. Based on the research findings both the men and women are prohibited from cutting their dreadlocks.

Dreadlocks, now considered fashionable, by celebrities, both in and out of context (Gondwe, 2002:14). Rastafari dreadlocks are natural without chemical used in matting whilst the Rastafari styles are maintained in salons by hairdressers. It was identified that not all people wearing dreadlocks are Rastas, but Rastas are expected to wear dreadlocks. As Mr Zau (09 February 2015) notes:

The dreadlocks are an outward expression of Rastafari. They represent the natural crown and covenant with God. In some religions, covenants are established by reciting the commandments. In Rastafari dreadlocks are a sign that Rastamen will not kill, do violence or eat meat. This is an agreement with God.

There are different reactions among members of the society regarding Rastafari livity and dreadlocks. Although it is expected for Rastafari adherents that they wear dreadlocks, this is not always the case. Accordingly, Biblical scriptures justifies the wearing of dreadlocks by Rastafari adherents. However, it is also a personal choice as Erskine (2005:107) indicates, "... the wearing of dreadlocks was a merging of inner and outer. It was a song that rebirth had taken place; it meant that the wearer had a commitment to refine self in relation to Africa, to say yes Africa and no Europe". In addition, as previously mentioned, dreadlocks are symbolic for Rastafari adherents around the world, including those in Tshwane. It was discovered that the Rastafari dreadlocks are worn in different ways as per the various Rastafari orders. The Bobo Ashanti, Twelve Tribes of Israel, and Nyabbinghi order have unique ways to embrace the dreadlocks and wear the turban.



The Twelve Tribes of Israel and Nyabbinghi order are very similar with regard to the way in which women wear their head wrap or turban. According to Sister Thipsta (31<sup>st</sup> May 2014), there are various ways in which one can do so. Firstly, you will have to tie your dreadlocks up in a turban and wrap it in either a cloth or Rastafari material. Secondly, one can tie their dreadlocks in a ponytail and use an elastic band. Lastly, those who are fairly new and have short dreadlocks wear Rastafari hats.

There has been stereotypes and stigmas surrounding dreadlocks within the community. Some scenarios, were rejection of Rastafari adherents or individuals in the professional's positions. The school learners were subjected to discrimination because of dreadlocks, which were described as unclean. However, as people begun to wear dreadlocks and Rastafari parents took action at schools, dreadlocks became accepted in the community.

#### **4.4 Rastafari Practices and Rites**

Rastafari identities are fluid and have created uniqueness between being a Rasta and a member of a specific order. Rastafari adherents are unique in that they have rites and practices which includes baptism, funeral and burial practices all of which are gendered. It is clear that women are assigned specific roles within Rastafari livity. One popular practice is the gatherings also known as Dub occasions.

##### **4.4.1.Dubs**

The comings together or Dub celebrations are essential for Rastafari adherents. It is a way to express and promote their identity among the members of the society. The Dubs can serve for purposes of celebration or meditation as well as spiritual purposes. My Dub experience is recorded below and illustrates this.

It was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013 at Soshanguve around 20:00pm when I arrived at the Dub occasion. The atmosphere was very welcoming, a Rastafari flag placed high at the gate. The street was filled with Rastafari adherents, the dancehall reggae music was playing very loud outside and it was packed with people. I have studied the Rastafarian greetings and have mastered them. I was very comfortable and felt at home because of the warmth and welcomes we received. I was accompanied by a friend, my sister and Jahman who had introduced me to the Rastafari livity. The Rastafari adherents and some members of the community were dancing

a step dance in the street. Jahman explained that it was a dancehall evening, where all Rastafari adherents from Tshwane and outside the province came. I did notice sisters and could not wait to meet with them. After greeting everyone, Jahman introduced me to Mommas and Poppas. These were the terms used to refer to elders in Rastafari. I joined some sisters as Jahman left to join the Rastafari brothers. I noticed that there was a huge difference in how space is used and shared.

The women would either sit in groups or chant away from the men. The men would smoke alone and I learnt that they were also cooking. Therefore, the women would be treated like Queens and all the duties assigned to men. As I was talking to the women (sisters) they taught me the dance step which was extremely difficult to me but they were patient enough as I slowly learnt the moves. I discovered that the dance step had a history. It originated from Jamaica: when Rastafarians protested, they would take steps back and forth repeatedly.

The dance area was occupied by a few men as others were cooking and smoking the herb. Accordingly, men usually cook *ital* because women are not allowed to cook during their menstrual periods. Hence, it was proper for men to cook since they would not know which women were menstruating. As I sat to take a break from the dancing, one Rastaman arrived with a container full with the herb. He offered everyone ganja for the evening. I gave thanks but did not accept the herb. I felt sad as I considered it rude to reject a gift. I did not take it because I don't smoke and had no knowledge what to do with ganja. The children were also dancing and puffing ganja. I discovered that it was a celebration for everyone despite their age.

There are different kinds of Dubs: weddings, earth days, baptisms and musical Dubs. The Dubs also occur during the Rastafarian holidays. As Sister Vonne (18 June 2015) explains:

We gather on holidays like 23 July Emperor Earth day light Majesty birthday, Dub is a strong thing, it's Friday, Saturday until Sunday. But for Bhingi it can be seven days and three days depending on the magnitude of the holiday. Normally, Dubs can be for various holiday 23 July Earth day light Majesty birthday, he was born 1892 in Ethiopia. Bhingi is seven lights with earth lights, such gathering we attend as Rasta together and celebrate as oneness.

The Dubs are unique in that most Rastafari adherents would come with their families for the duration of the ceremonies. As pointed out above, these serve for different types of celebration. The Dub ceremonies are spaces where differences in gender performance between women and men can easily be observed. There is gender differentiation whereby men engage in more

activities than women. For examples, men are responsible for kitchen duties such as cooking and cleaning. On the other side, women are responsible for looking after the children and sharing knowledge among themselves.

The major role played by women is before any Dub celebration; it is, to ensure the tidiness and decorations of the Ises venue and to provide fruits, candles, Bible, water and ganja. The men are responsible for preaching, playing the drums and anything that revolves around the altar; the decoration is the men's job and women do not participate but are passive observers. Furthermore, the women do not puff from the same *Kuchie* as men; each gender has their own *Kuchies*. Rastafari principle is based on the space separation and gendered roles between men and women. When answering a question on how women feel about lack of roles within the church, Sister Lee (04 June 2014) says:

The sisters don't play the drums nor read the Bible. It is the brothers who read the book and recite. I believe that we can also read and preach. Why don't we get the opportunity too? As women we should participate too. I live Rastafari the way I know how.

The Rastafari men are conscious that women can participate in the *Ises* ceremonies. It is possible to allow women to play the drums and preach the Bible. However, it can only be practised among women's gatherings and not when they integrate with men. The main reason is that Rastafari rites and doctrine do not allow women to preach. According to Rastafari doctrine women are to be submissive and learn in silence. The statement is justified by these particular verses (1 Timothy 2:11-12): "Let a woman learn in silence and with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over man, but to be in silence."

Dubs are also opened to the public whereby people can come and observe and even join in during the dancing. It is a space orientation for strengthening and growing the Rastafari nations. Unlike having a braai or a birthday celebration, Rastafari adherents hold Dub ceremonies, with music, food, dancing, *Ises* and chanting. Within these Dubs the men, women and youth come together in unity for celebration purposes. Rastafari men and women hold different positions during the gathering. The women are nurturers, mothers, and queens who are highly feared and respected because of their fertility (whether fertile or infertile). Women are feared because they have the power of creation. Somehow, they are seen as goddesses with the supremacy of

fertility. This is an act men cannot perform, which generates fear and great respect towards women.

It is important to note that Dubs are part of a massive celebration that can be subdivided to serve a specific event. The chronology of a Dub celebration is *churchial* or *Ises*, followed by *grounation*, reasoning and later on, the dancehall. The *churchial* or *Ises* can be held with *grounation* on one evening and the following dancehall with *Ises* the next morning. The general observation from my field work is: I arrived at the Dub for His Majesty King Haile Selassie Earth day, which took the whole weekend. On Friday, it was the *Ises* and later in the evening, reasoning. The following day, Saturday evening in the dancehall but before dawn is the *Ises*. The reasoning and *grounation* sessions take place at any given time. Below is the discussion of the *Churchial* or *Ises*, *grounation*, reasoning and dancehall.

#### 4.4.2. *Churchial* or *Ises*

The *churchial* or *Ises* is a church sermon for the Rastafari adherents which is the first session of *grounation*. The *churchical* or *Ises* is characterised by playing of the drums, singing and praising Jah. There are Friday *churchically* sermons or *Ises* which begin on Friday at 18:00pm and last until 06:00am the following morning. The other *churchial* or *Ises* sermons can be incorporated in Earth days, weddings, and baptisms over the weekend. The sermon does not take place in a venue or on land that Rastafari adherents call their church. It usually takes place at different homes as per agreement. At times a tent will be hired; men would clean a portion of land to erect the tent while women would tidy the inside. There are rules before entering the temple. Firstly one would have to take off their shoes and men uncover their head inside the temple.

The sermon usually starts with a priest welcoming members. The hymns are distributed to those who do not know the songs. Most of the Rastafari hymns are Christian hymns in which the word Christ, Lord or God is replaced by Jah. For Rastafari adherents Christ is seen as one of the prophets or messengers and not as God, which is why many of the hymns are replaced with Jah. At the end of each hymn Jah Rastafari His Imperial Majesty is mentioned. There are two *Kuchies*, which are lit for men and women. The clapping of hand, drums and singing continues throughout each night. There are moments during which everyone becomes silent and the smoking continues. It is noticeable that during the sermon the women's position and

participation is limited as compared to those of the men. The men would play the drums and lead the hymns. The women usually follow after the men and do get the opportunity to lead the hymns at times, provided the men request these from the women's section.

The women definitely play a minimal role during the church proceedings. The position of women is described as Queenly because they come strictly for praising and meditations. As per the Bible and the Rastafari doctrine the Rastafari women respect and obey their positions. This is seen in three aspects, firstly the seating arrangements, secondly being prohibited from lighting the *Kuchie* and thirdly restriction on attendance of *Ises* during menstrual cycles or after birth. From this perceptive, women remain humble and follow the necessary doctrine within Rastafari. (Observation 03rd October 2014.)

#### 4.4.3. *Grounation*

A further aspect that is fundamental to the Rastafari of Tshwane as an identity is *grounation*. The *grounation* or *groundation* is derived from the word ground, as indicated earlier. It is a place where Rastafari gatherings take place for spiritual purposes. According to Hansing (2005:93) "the *grounation* is when Rastafarians gather for a smoke to discuss their faith or social matters". It brings Rastafari adherents together to praise Jah and also fight against oppression and Babylon systems. There are no set times or dates for *grounation* as it can take place at any given moment. The difference between the Dub and *grounation* is that *Dub* describes the whole proceedings of the gathering whereas *grounation* is dimension of the gathering where talking is involved.

To the Nyabinghi the *groundation* is known as Bhingi. As Jahug (1992:5) describes the process of *grounation*:

[as]a congregation of Rastafari in Ivine Issemble which is the serious and sincere duty of the Nyabinghi Order which commemorates the origin coming together to chant down Babylon and to give Jah glory. For one man alone is but a voice in the wilderness, but the congregation of man is omnipotent.

This session has rules which Rastas should abide by, such as: cameras, videoing or phones are prohibited, women should cover their heads with a turban and men remove their turbans before entering the session. According to Rastafari adherents, like any other political movement or

gatherings, the *grounation* is a platform for talking about social problems but also coming up with recommendations. According to Sister Yarah (9 June 2015),

The platform of *grounation* allowed me to learn more about Rastafari. I am still growing within Rasta. But it was through social platforms like *grounation* I get to interact with the elders, brothers and everyone. If I don't understand I ask, if I want clarity I ask. Like we talk about our challenges, Rastafari teachings and basically everything that comes to mind. But most importantly you leave the place with consciousness of Rasta life.

The *grounation* platform is open to everyone, women and men. Anyone can express their opinion regarding any matter. Rastafari women can also be seen as participants during the talking session and are not prevented from raising their opinion. The other vital session is known as *Ises* or *churchical* service which is not limited and also includes members of the public.

#### 4.4.4. Reasoning

The reasoning session is also described as dialogue between the Rastafari adherents, which follows after the sermon. According to Jahug (1992:7) “[the] reasoning session is the foundation of Nyabbinghi order. It is the sound power of Rastafari without any weapons but words used”. Such a session is a dialogue between the Rastafari adherents themselves. It involves topics ranging from social ones to politics and religious issues with the aim of discourse. It is similar to *grounation* sessions, as mentioned earlier. According to Yawney (1978:231), “an essential part of grounding is the informal discussion known as reasoning, which is an open ended, dialogical discourse between two or more brethren”.

The following discussion is based on my observations at a reasoning session in that took place on a Friday. It began with the *Ises*, followed by *grounation* and later, reasoning. At the reasoning session, (Sister Yarah 03 October 2014) asked the elder about ganja: why it has so many negative names in society such as *pot*, *zolo*, marijuana yet Rastas call it the holy herb. What is so holy about ganja which is associated with negativity? The elder mentioned that the scriptures teach about the tree of life. He gave the example of the Garden of Eden: was it the rule or the fruit that caused trouble? It is clear that the herb will be misused. Although the reasoning session like many other events is dominated by men, this does not mean that women cannot participate in the discussion. In fact, the women are encouraged to raise their concerns

so that they can better understand Rastafari. However, it takes courage for women to express their concerns among the men.

Rastafari women and men can participate in reason and are not limited to raising their opinions. According to Salter (2008:18) “finally, ‘reasoning’ itself is seldom formalized among Rastafari, and even where it is, there are vast differences in how ‘reasoning’ is done from one group to the next”. To cite just the most obvious difference, among some Rastafari (who are of The Twelve Tribes of Israel and Nyabbinghi) can play a central role in reasoning and are able to participate fully, but among other groups women are consigned simply to ‘making harmony’ by virtue of an ontological inferiority<sup>19</sup> that comes from being ‘made’ and not ‘created’. This implies that woman are made from a man and should follow their lead. It is virtually the natural law of order among Rastafari adherents. With such differences from group to group it is impossible to characterise Rastafari as an ‘orthoprax’ religion, a religion which emphasises ‘correct practices.’

Rastafari women of Tshwane are selective in terms of when to participate in a reasoning sessions. For instance, when there are fewer people in the temple or a smaller session, women are free to reason. But when there are more men during the reasoning session women either keep quiet as a matter of choice. The women are excluded and cannot be seen in a productive discussion during such engagements. If there was a concern or matter that women feel did not sit well with them then they are free to express their concerns after the sessions in private with the elders. There is one space of activity which opens up for entertainment for both women and men and that is chanting also referred to as the dancing; both Rastafarians and members of the public participate in the activity. This is a platform known as the dancehall which is opened to Rastafari men, women, children and members of the wider community.

#### 4.4.5. Dancehall

The dancehall is a pleasurable aspect during the Dub celebration. At this time, some members who come from afar arrive to set up their tents and also assist where possible. Unlike the *Ises* evening, the dancehall evenings are very crowded with Rastafari adherents and members of the community. The elders, youth, men and women as well as the members of the public populated

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<sup>19</sup> Ontological inferiority refers to women’s inferiority, which is biological as described by Bible passages.

the street where some were dancing and some observing. The selector<sup>20</sup> will start by playing a song and one person would begin the dance step. After a minute or two the others will join after grasping the dance step. The youth and men were the most energetic dancers.

The dancehall allows everyone: Rastafari adherents and members of the public the opportunity to join and also share ganja to smoke. The dancehall takes place on a street, a very public place where police and soldiers pass by. Amazingly, they do not harass the Rastafari adherents. Instead they would greet with their fists up or sound their hooters. When asked about the police reaction towards them, Jahman (28 June 2013) replied:

They know this is our territory they will not do anything to us. You can see that when they pass here, they salute us either lifting their fist up or beat the hooter. We are not disturbing anyone, just dancing and playing our music that's not an offense.

At the dancehall, the street becomes the Rastafari space to express themselves and also be known to society. A commonly known dance step is the Zion train which is opened to everyone. As long as one can master the dance step they can join the dance. The role of Rastafari women during the dancehall session is to participate, dance and sing along with the reggae music. Rastafari women's position is to stay in harmony, participate and be present during the session. Moreover, like any other person, women take the platform to suggest a specific song to dance to for the abovementioned popular dance step known as the Zion train.

#### 4.4.6. Zion Train

The Zion Train is known as the main dance step for the dancehall session. It is also very popular at Dubs celebrations. The selector would play either reggae, roots or dancehall music to entertain the Rastafari adherents and members of the public. Zion Train is also described by Bob Marley in his lyrics:

#### **Zion Train** (Lyrics by Bob Marley)

*Zion train is coming our way;*

*The Zion train is coming our way;*

*Oh, people, get on board! (you better get on board!)*

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<sup>20</sup> Selector refers to the DJ who plays records or music at an event



*Thank the Lord (praise Fari)*  
*I gotta catch a train, 'cause there is no other station;*  
*Then you going in the same direction (ooh-ooh).*

*Zion's train is coming our way;*  
*The Zion's train is coming our way.*

*Which man can save his brother's soul? (save your brother's soul)*  
*Oh man, it's just self-control. (oo-hoo-oo!)*  
*Don't gain the world and lose your soul (just don't lose your soul)*  
*Wisdom is better than silver and gold -*  
*To the bridge (ooh-ooh!)*

*Oh, where there's a will,*  
*There's always a way.*  
*Where there's a will,*  
*There's always a way (way, way, way, way),*

*Soul train is coming our way; er!*  
*Zion train is coming our way.*

*Two thousand years of history (history)*  
*Could not be wiped away so easily.*  
*Two thousand years of history (Black history)*  
*Could not be wiped so easily (could not be wiped so easily).*

*Oh, children, Zion train is comin' our way; get on board now!*  
*They said the Zion train is comin' our way;*  
*you got a ticket, so thank the Lord!*  
*Zion's train is - Zion's train is - Zion's train is - Zion's train -*  
*They said the soul train is coming our way;*  
*They said the soul train is coming our way. [fadeout]*

The first chorus defines the Zion Train step: when one begins a step, the others watch to learn the dance step. Once the beginner has illustrated the dance step the others join and follow the same dance step. Thereafter everyone else can join or let the Zion Train pass by. Slowly but surely, throughout the dancing, people begin to join the train. Also, note that the music played is powerful with a positive vibration and strong rhythm. As Sister Yarah (09 June 2015) comments, the Zion Train is fundamental as it describes the joy and praises to Jah. She explains by first quoting the verse below:

**Psalm 150** says

*Praise God in his sanctuary;*

*praise him in his mighty heavens.*

<sup>2</sup> *Praise him for his acts of power;*

*praise him for his surpassing greatness.*

<sup>3</sup> *Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,*

*praise him with the harp and lyre,*

<sup>4</sup> *praise him with timbre and dancing,*

*praise him with the strings and pipe,*

<sup>5</sup> *praise him with the clash of cymbals,*

*praise him with resounding cymbals.*

<sup>6</sup> *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.*

It says we should praise him, with chants and hymns. We should even dance, as long as you are spreading the word. And you are chanting for him. It doesn't mean to praise you should humble and be silent. God knows that you are chanting him. Do it in a way that satisfies you because the ways that satisfies you might be different to me. We can't all be singers. I love the concept of chanting instead of going to a tavern, pub or club to have fun.

The Zion Train is also a sign of unity among Rastafari adherents themselves and also of opening up to members of the public to learn about their livity. After the song ends every person, whether Rastafarian or not, comes together in a circle to bring their fists together. As Sister Spirit (07 July 2015) explains:

Touching is connecting with your brothers and sisters, when fists come together, we join in oneness and chant Jah Rastafari to honour His Majesty. When you haven't seen your family member or sister for a

very long time, what do you do? You jump, get excited, hug or even kiss them. You show them love by touching.

Similarly, the dance step or Zion Train concerns praising and rejoicing Jah Rastafari. It is about sharing food, ganja and teachings of His Majesty. Thus, it is opened to every single one regardless of their gender, background or even skin colour. The active role of Rastafari women during the Rastafari Zion train is to join the Zion train. Although the women do not have such vibrant energetic dance moves as the men, they still join the train with their smooth dance step. In dance men and women move differently due to differences in body structure. For instance, men generally have more upper-body strength and women often have more hip flexibility than men. The women's presence and involvement in the Zion train is evident in their existence within Rastafari. The women show their vocal prowess, express the feminine dance moves and their love for Rastafari. In so doing, they pass down the teachings of Rastafari unity through their children who are by their side during the dancing. Rastafari shows the radical difference in understanding masculinity and femininity.

Today the public performance of dance is regarded as a feminine activity, so that men who dance often operate in a sea of stereotypes (Fisher & Shay 2009). For instance, kitchen duties and dance, be it classical or ballet, are not activities for a real man. Contrary to this, Rastafari men uphold the dance and domestic duties. Nonetheless, dance can be considered a ritualistic practice in the lives of a group, be it men or women. Dance is symbolic and bears a specific meaning for the Rastafari adherents. From the anthropological point of view, dance can be defined as a cultural practice and as a social ritual (Radcliffe-Brown 1994), whereby it is seen as a means of aesthetic pleasure and a means for establishing ties and specific structures in the community.

Overall, dance is a human expression through movement which is not gendered. It should be viewed as a cultural practice and a form of social life, not masculine or feminine. The most important aspect of dance is to communicate a message through movement, have fun and also educate the young people. According to Polhemus (1993:8), "societies create dances and that dance is actually a 'metaphysics of culture', because a culture of specific society is embodied in the forms of material and physical culture, and the latter is also stylized and schematized in the form of dance." The dance should be regarded as part of everyday life and not merely as

movement. In Rastafari women and men pass on the Zion train to younger generations who will later pass it on in their turn.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter discussed information on Rastafari livity, paying attention to its symbolism, social and political structures. The basic beliefs are based on the *ital* livity, dreadlocks expression and practices surrounding the holy herb. The Rastafari ritual and practices displayed the gendered role and performance during the occasion. Rastafari women were labelled as powerful and respected because of their fertility. Therefore, there are excluded from kitchen duties or cooking during the gatherings. Women have created a unique position within Rastafari occasion, as they remain to be educators, caretakers and nurturers. Although they are given lesser privileges, women argue that they appreciate the gender norms because they found the practices within Rastafari livity. It was indicated that the women uphold their moral commitment and are guided by the teaching of the Bible within the livity.

## **5. Chapter Five: Rastafari Rituals and Celebration**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The Rastafari adherents of Tshwane have developed their own identity and ways to perform rituals and celebrations. In this way, they are able to celebrate important events together within Rastafari livity. The rituals and ceremonies confirm the separate identity of Rastafari; moreover their ability to bury or baptise (as discussed below) on their own demonstrates that they do not depend on other people.

### **5.2 Rastafari rituals**

#### **5.2.1. Birth rituals**

The birth ritual is essential, particularly for Rastafari women. Rastafari women tell their narrative of giving birth, the practices and the protocols that are observed. Just like any other women, the Rastafari women would give birth in a hospital, which is highly recommended; the practice of giving birth at home is not implemented among Rastafari women. Many describe giving birth in hospital as a preference than at home.

According to Sister Thipsta:

It is very important to note that in the golden years, Rasta women gave birth at home. But today, we can go to the hospitals. There are after-birth purification customs that occur when I had a baby boy, I had to stay four months at home. This meant that I could not go to the Dubs, sister gatherings, weddings or church. I could not cook for my Kingman. This is a spiritual purification a pure experience and a stage sisters have to pass through. When I had a daughter I only stayed three months for purification. The boy child is the prince and should be honoured for longer and princesses take from their mothers.

As one can notice, the purification period varies depending on the gender of the baby. Rastafari women are defiled by giving birth. Moreover, giving birth to a girl defiles women more than giving birth to a boy. The main reason is that, she remains unclean for a longer period. The boy child is referred to as prince and the girl child as princess. According to the women the male child is a family's honour, pride and legacy. He is the one that carries the family name and continues the heritage; therefore special care is needed. The male children have greater statuses than female children because of their sex.

According to Ras-Work (2006:2) the boy child is often received with joy and the rituals are more elaborate, with the mother receiving compliments for producing a male child, while the father enjoys pride with assurance of the continuity of the family and the protection of his property. The birth of a girl is less ritualistic with reduced value attributed to the mother. In some cities in Asia female infanticide has become a practice: to kill the girls soon after or before they are born. It reflects the low status accorded to women in Rastafari. Most importantly, it is the most destructive manifestation of anti-female that pervades patriarchal societies. The socialising processes observed for boys and girls are designed and rigorously applied to instil a feeling of superiority in boys while girls are groomed to accept subjugation and inferiority with apathy (Ras-Work 2006).

According to Rastafari custom, women should disassociate themselves and the child from the broader society for a period of time. It is a spiritual and natural process for Rastafari women after childbirth. At home, the man takes care of the Queen by being responsible for cooking, cleaning and looking after her. The period in which the Kingman is responsible for house duties varies per person and situation. Accordingly, most Rastafari women either went home to their mother's house or took care of the infant as the Kingman was away for work purposes. Most women interviewed were stay-at-home mothers who looked after the children which had greater value.

The period of the purification ritual is the significant time for women to grow spiritual and intellectual. Similarly, as regards the purification after birth, the Rastafari women's status in burials and funerals are minimal as explained below.

#### 5.2.2. Funerals and burials

Funerals and burials are a fundamental aspect of Rastafari identity. This is because of the ritual ceremonies which are undertaken by Rastas themselves. Rastafari adherents of Tshwane are very supportive of each other in such occasions. They take it upon themselves to bury their dead according to Rastafari principles, which includes memorial, proceedings and burial rituals. Funerals are attended by Rastafari adherents from all the orders and the priests from these orders conduct the ceremony. I attended the funeral of Momma Azaniya who was in her late forties who died after a long illness. The prayer session began immediately that it was announced that she had died. This is the time that the family members, neighbours and friends

bring their condolences. The prayer sessions at her house were held from the day she was pronounced dead until the burial day. There were two sessions, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

I attended one afternoon prayer service which took place at 14:00 pm until 16:00 pm while the other service was in the evening, 19:00 pm until 20:00 pm. There was a tent erected at the backyard for the prayer or memorial service. The Rastafari priests and elders are responsible for the proceedings of the service. The priest began by opening the ceremony, by welcoming family and friends. He lit the three candles that were on the table and requested a hymn. After the singing and clapping of hands the priest read a scripture. It was an opening for words of comfort to the family. At this stage, it allowed friends and neighbours to render a speech or a word of comfort to the family. Rastafari men and women including non-Rastafari people stood up at a given time to deliver their condolences. While the prayer service is commencing at the tent, there are other activities taking place such as preparing refreshments, cleaning and washing the dishes.

The above proceedings continue until the night vigil before the funeral. It was on a Saturday when a night vigil was observed by both Rastafari adherents, family members and neighbours. The night is observed by hymns, singing and smoking of the herb until the following morning. On Sunday morning before going to the burial site, the home of the deceased is purified by being sprinkled everywhere with ganja water (pure water that contains ganja). This is a sign of cleansing the place and removing the evil spirits. The ritual of purification is performed by the Rastafari elder and priests with the help of other Rastafari men. A memorial service is held along with the proceedings of prayer and singing of the hymn. There is a programme director who facilitates the proceedings, such as speeches by family members and reading of the obituary. At the graveyard, the same procedure is followed whereby ganja water is again sprinkled everywhere. The priest recites a Psalm and the singing and clapping of hands will begin. The scriptures are read as the coffin is lowered. The men later cover the grave with soil. Later on the priest calls out members of the family to read the wreath and put it on top of the soil. The holy herb is burnt as the singing and clapping of hands continue. After the cemetery ritual, everyone will go back to the house, where a bowl of holy water is placed at the gate for cleansing. Before queuing for *ital* food everyone washes their hands.

### 5.2.3.. Earthday Celebrations

Rastafari adherents refer to birthdays as ‘earth days’ which they have a unique way of celebrating. This is also applicable to the Rastafari wedding celebration: earth days (birthdays) and marriages are usually similar in the way they are celebrated. For instance, with earth day, a flyer is circulated via Facebook, WhatsApp or people are called telephonically to notify the Rastafari adherents about the event. Like a Dub ceremony, the earth day begins on a Friday with the Ises, followed by dancehall and ends on Sunday. Again, it brings together Rastafari adherents in oneness and unity to share and celebrate the earth day of a member.

### 5.2.4. Wedding Celebrations

The weekend Dub celebration is also similar to weddings of Rastafari men and women. The unique aspect of the Rastafari wedding is that it begins with the *lobolo* celebration. The first aspect of the said celebration is the negotiation when both families come together to discuss the bridal price. The period of *lobolo* varies as per people and culture. Based on the Rastafari interviews, *lobolo* is paid a year before the actual white wedding celebration. This means both families have a mutual agreement. In cases where both families are unable to come to a mutual agreement on the amount of *lobolo*, the groom can negotiate to pay in half or decline to do so. The *lobolo* traditions are initiated by men from both sides of the families. In a case where the woman has a child from a previous relationship the *lobolo* is subtracted based on those facts. However, when the woman does not have a child or is still a virgin more *lobolo* is paid.

Like many other African traditions, the women are not part of the negotiations and have minimal responsibilities, such as preparing food and refreshments. The *lobolo* celebration is a fundamental celebration because it consolidates the traditional aspect of marriage. In essence, both the bride and groom are married and allowed to stay together. The *lobolo* celebration begins at the bride’s side of the family who have prepared a farewell celebration for her. The elder women give her lessons and teachings about marriage.

It is uncommon for Rastafari adherents to slaughter a cow or have meat during their wedding celebrations as they are vegetarian. Since weddings are also a family celebration it is per agreement with both families whether to have meat or not. As indicated, it usually remains taboo to have a cow slaughtered or meat at Rastafari weddings since Rastafari adherents themselves are vegan and vegetarians. The family, friends and neighbours would dance around



awaiting the arrival of the bride to the groom's home. At the time, the groom is also home awaiting to fetch the bride when she arrives at the gate. In Tshwane's case, everyone is dressed in traditional attire which could be Pedi, Tswana, Sotho, Tsonga or Swati designs that embody African prints and fabrics. The groom's side of the family will recite praise songs and poems as a sign to welcome their new bride. The wedding celebration is also celebrated differently by Rastafari adherents. Some women prefer having a *lobolo* celebration, which will later be followed by the white wedding. As Sister Lee (04 June 2014) notes:

At my wedding celebration it was a three-day ceremony, which began with the *Ises*, the following morning was the actual wedding day. I wore a white wedding dress and I and my Kingman were blessed by the priest.

The wedding or marriage ideology also varies as per Rastafari adherent. Some Rastafari women do not wear white dresses but have a Dub celebration whereby they make vows before the priest. This means they can live together and are recognised as husband and wife. Many Rastafari women dispute the white dress wedding because it incorporates elements of Babylon, something which they are moving away from. These involve signing documents and reciting vows in front of the priest who is a registered marriage officer. According to Sister Makhada (13 May 2015) she did not have a wedding or a celebration. For her it was different because the *lobolo* was not paid but they took vows before the Rastafari priest. The concept of Rastafari marriages means one is with a Kingman, should be committed to the relationship and share love with one another. The couple is recognised as King and Queen (husband and wife) within Rastafari livity. The issue of marriage and courtship is different from person to person. Some Rastafari adherents follow the African tradition of *lobolo*, whereas others dismiss it as Rastafari livity.

Rastafari women are needed within the celebrations because they contribute during the occasion. The fact that they take care of and facilitate the smooth running of the celebration proves that they are needed. However, when it comes to participating in the rituals the women are not wanted because of their lower status. The wedding celebration plays a major role in the lives of Rastafari women. Based on interviews, Rastafari men have very little to say towards the running of the wedding celebration. Although it is not customary for women to wear rings or have white dress weddings, the latter are becoming popular among Rastafari adherents of Tshwane. The women want the white dresses and rings, which Rastafari does not promote. In

a case where a Rastafari woman wears a white dress, she is still regarded as a Rastafari woman. This illustrates the adaption of Rastafari livity that adapts to change and influences on the system. The women play a subservient role during the wedding celebration. Firstly, they have free rein in organising the wedding attire. Secondly, ensuring that the tents and decorations are in order. Thirdly in the kitchen, women are responsible to ensure that the pots, plates, food and linens are clean. In some instances, men cook during wedding Dubs or the family members and the Rastafari women do. Lastly, tidying and cleaning the place after the wedding. The wedding celebrations are the second fundamental event after the *lobolo* which is also mostly still occurring within Rastafari livity. The *lobolo* practices are imperative to African people making it a popular cultural practice.

### 5.3 Lobolo Practices

The orally<sup>21</sup> transmitted tradition of *lobolo* or *lobola* is a widely practiced cultural tradition and recognised marriage contract within South Africa. The term used in this chapter is the noun “*lobolo*” instead of the verb “*lobola*”. Each cultural group has a specific term for *lobolo*; *Mahadi* is used by the Basotho, *Magadi* in Northern Sotho and *Lovala* in Xitsonga. As an accepted cultural practice, *lobolo* has attracted much interest, particularly from the anthropological field. The practice of *lobolo* is one of the African practices in which the bride price is paid by the potential husband. The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 120 of 1998<sup>22</sup> defines the custom of *lobolo* as:

Property in cash or in kind, whether known as *lobolo*, *bogadi*, *bohali*, *xuma*, *lumalo*, *thaka*, *magad*, *amabheka* or by any other name, which a prospective husband or the head of his family undertakes to give to the head of the prospective wife's family in consideration of a customary marriage.

According to Mofokeng (2005:278), it is:

An agreement between the family group of the prospective husband and the family group of the prospective wife that on or before the marriage ceremony, there would be the transfer of

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<sup>21</sup> Orally transmitted refers to there being no documentation based on the teachings of *lobolo* in Africa- just oral traditions.

<sup>22</sup> The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998 (ACT No. 120 of 1998) is a South African statute in terms of which marriages performed under Africa customary law are recognized as legal marriages.

property from the family group of the husband, to the family group of the wife in respect of the marriage.

However, this is not always the case; among Tswana and Sepedi-speakers there are other requirements, such as only after the first child is born as this proves fertility. The origin, purpose and importance of *lobolo* can be found in the ancient practices. According to Bekker (1989:150), “although this view is based on speculation after consideration of ancient law, it seems probable that the custom of *lobolo* originated as a species of sale exchange; in primitive patriarchal societies, the head of the family has the *jus vitae necisque* (power of life and death) over his children, the power to sell them in bondage, or give them in marriage”. It implies that young women and girls are subjected to *lobolo* as a cultural practice.

From this definition, the following conclusions are inevitable: first, *lobolo* is an expressive payment of money or cows. Second, *lobolo* is delivered in respect of the marriage (which includes her labour, obedience, fertility and care for the husband), and not as payment for the wife. Third, the prospective husband is, in most cases, not the person who gives *lobolo*. The *lobolo* is delivered to the prospective wife’s family group on the man’s behalf by his family group in respect of his marriage to his first wife. It is expected of the prospective husband to prove he is capable of taking care of the wife. Fourthly, the prospective wife is not the recipient of *lobolo*, but her family group is. Each cultural group has a particular way in which *lobolo* is settled (Bekker 1989:156).

Some of the practices of *lobolo* vary, based on the cultural communities, for instance among various Xhosa ones, the amount of *lobolo* payable is not limited to a specific figure and constitutes a bond of goodwill between the families of the bride and the bridegroom for the entire life of the bride and even after her death. The prospective bridegroom would be expected to give up one, two or three head of cattle each time his father-in-law turned to him for help (Bekker Seymour’s Customary Law 163 of 1989). As seen above, marriage does not include just a bride and groom: rather, it is a family affair. According to Bekker (1989:96), “customary marriage includes the whole family rather than the bride and groom. It brings along the mutual rights and responsibility between the spouses within the family groups”.

Some people argue that *lobolo* practices are not acknowledged as patriarchal in nature.

Rather *lobolo* include women who contribute by playing their roles during the preparations. Some Nguni traditions men demand a child before *lobolo* is negotiated. The number of cattle or cash price required for *lobolo* differs, as mentioned, when a woman is a virgin, has a child or was married before. According to the Nguni tradition (Ndebele, Swati, Xhosa, Zulu) a woman has to bear a child before the male side of the family pays *lobolo*. The woman is required to prove that she is fertile by giving birth before any *lobolo* negotiation. After, the birth of a child, the male side of the family can proceed with the latter.

#### 5.3.1. *Lobolo* and Rastafari women

Customary law is a legal aspect alongside common law within South Africa. The marriages under *lobolo* are recognised under the law. Thus, the different cultural groups can engage in the practices without any concerns of illegitimacy. This shows that people who adhere to the custom of *lobolo* view it as a significant custom that connects them with their ancestral spirits. Failure to pay it might therefore, bring about bad luck and the bridegroom may encounter difficulties if he resists the payment of *lobolo*. These views on *lobolo* are affirmed by the observation that *lobolo* is widely practiced by most black South Africans, who are not prepared to abandon it, despite the difficulties it gives rise to (Ngema 2013:408).

According to interviews with Rastafari women, it was indicated that *lobolo* was essential particularly from their family's side. It is not a cultural practice which was found within Rastafari, but rather an African practice. Most of the Rastafari adherents are from the Southern African cultural groupings that already practice *lobolo*. Therefore there is an expectation by families that *lobolo* negotiations will be entered into despite Rastafari not having such a requirement. This was supported by the Rastafari women's side of the family to ensure the legitimacy of a traditional marriage. It involves negotiation by the elders who are men. These men can be uncles, fathers or brothers; they are involved in negotiations because they are men. When asked why women are not permitted to engage in *lobolo* negotiations their reply was, it is tradition that allows men and forbids women to do so.

There seem to be cultural and family clashes where *lobolo* is required from the Rastafari man side of the family. In the case where a Rastafari man gets married to a woman, the woman's side of the family requests *lobolo* as part of their African traditional practices. It is an obligation for the Rastafari man to pay the bridal price. If *lobolo* is not paid, the parents refuse to let their

daughter leave the house. This was the case with Sister Phetoh (28 July 2014) who noted that she has had two children with her Kingman but her parents would not allow her to move in with him. Their major prohibition is that he did not pay *lobolo*. Although she visits him on weekends and holidays she is not allowed to permanently stay with him. The two are committed Rastafari adherents and cannot run away together and live a happily ever after life because marriage involves the two families. Furthermore, the two have to obey the African traditional practice that forms part of their identity.

According to the *lobolo* practices, women have a minor role assigned to them during the negotiation. A typical *lobolo* negotiation includes sending a letter to the prospective wife. The date will be set whereby the men's family will come for the negotiations. The women's role are limited to kitchen duties and taking care of guests. The typical description of *lobolo* is applicable to both the African tradition and the Rastafari *lobolo*. Since the Rastafari adherents have adopted the practice they cannot bring about changes nor even suggest that women take part in the negotiations. According to a mixed focus group (07 July 2015) (married and single) Rastafari women, the women emphasised their concern about their absence during the negotiation. Most feel that the elders should consider the social conditions and living expertise of their partners because an unreasonable amount of *lobolo* is required. Rastafari women elaborated that it is part of their African traditional practices and they cannot dismiss it for Rastafari livity. When asked about the practice of Rastafari and the African traditional practice of *lobolo*, Sister Vonne (18 June 2015) was quick to say:

The African traditional practices are part of our culture before I am Rasta I am African. There are certain practices which cannot be dismissed because of Rastafari. But it is a personal choice whether to infuse Rastafari with other practices. For instance, appeasing the ancestors and ceremonies after child birth it's a persons' choice.

Some of the African rites of passage play an essential role among the lives of a cultural group. Such rites might include, amongst others, birth, initiation, marriage and death. Rastafari adherents come from different cultural settings; therefore Rastafari does not allow them to combine the two practices. However, there are different views on this amongst Rastafari adherents. There are African practices which are contested by some Rastafari adherents. The practices of initiations and ancestral worship remain imperative to Rastafari women's livity.

### 5.3.2. African practices of initiation and ancestral worship

Historically, among Christian societies of Southern Africa, traditional cultural rites were discouraged and discarded by missionaries. Rites of passage like initiation (*Lebollo*, in Sesotho), ancestral<sup>23</sup> worship and others were regarded as heathen and superstitious and therefore, as very bad (Thabane 2002:239-252). Thus, Rastafari adherents also uphold this perspective to discard rites of passage. The only recognised rite of passage in Rastafari livity as baptism into the livity. The process is considered to be a vital ceremony whereby a name is given to a new member of Rastafari. However, as noted, Rastafari adherents who uphold values of Black Consciousness and Africanism seem to dismiss certain African traditional practices. The fact that Rastafari doctrine disregards such practices leaves many unanswered questions concerning the livity.

The above-mentioned rites of passage are non-existent and uncommon within Rastafari livity. It remains a personal choice to either practice or reject them. The study paid particular attention to Rastafari adherents in urban areas and discovered that a minority promote some African traditional practices as part of Rastafari livity. These African traditional practices refer to male initiation, *lobolo* and ancestral appeasement. Rastafari is a transforming livity because it continuously develops itself and therefore does not have these types of rituals. When asked during the interview about rites of passage among the youth most of the participants revealed that they were not raised within Rastafari and had no knowledge about male circumcision or initiation, but were aware of the baptisms and gatherings of Rastafari. As intimated, African traditional practices of initiation are not encouraged nor practiced within Rastafari livity.

Rastafari adherents hold different perceptions regarding ancestral worship. According to Bae and Van der Merwe (2008:1302), “in most societies where the belief in ancestors is common, a record of people who have lived and died is kept in the memory of the living members of the community. They have moved into the category of ancestors, or the living dead. The concept of ancestral involvement in everyday life is more than a story or a myth”. Some Rastas are traditional healers, like Sister Nancy, who practices as a traditional healer and also wears the traditional beads as a sign of being a healer. According to Sister Nancy, her mother is also a traditional healer. Based on her life history she was introduced to Rastafari when she was still a teenager. She would go to gatherings and follow the Rastafari doctrine. From that stage, she

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<sup>23</sup> Ancestral passed family members

regarded herself as Rasta and was also accepted within Rastafari livity. Furthermore, she had to fulfil her calling and go to *twasa* which is a stage of initiation towards becoming a *Sangoma*. Sister Nancy (03 October 2014) pointed out that she did so and fulfilled her traditional duties. She is known as a traditional healer who is a Rasta. It was not her choice to be a traditional healer but a spiritual calling. Sister Nancy stressed that it is difficult to reconcile Rastafari with the traditional practices. But there are no other options than to practice as a traditional healer and be a Rasta. There is variation in infusing the traditional practices with Rastafari livity. An interview with Poppa (31 July 2014), an elder in Rastafari, notes that:

Rastafari does not allow traditional practices or healers. It is wrong what Sister Nancy is doing. Those people worship water beings and Rastafari hails His Majesty. It is either you are Rastafari or a *Sangoma*. It is impossible to serve two masters.

Although Sister Nancy says that it is not easy to be a traditional healer and Rastafari women, she has to reconcile the Rastafari livity and the African traditional practice in one space. Firstly she has accepted her calling to assist people and also perform her responsibility as a Rastafari woman. She emphasises that she cannot choose between the two but must allocate a space for the practices.

Hence, as mentioned there are different perceptions of uniting Rastafari with traditional practices. Poppa thought that it is impossible to reconcile the two whereas Sister Nancy confirms that there is nothing wrong in practicing as a healer and being a Rastafari woman. From this perspective, it is clear that African traditional practices and Rastafari livity can be fused. Rastafari claims to promote everything African but rejects traditional practices. Since there are conflicting views, it becomes difficult to reconcile the two practices.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The chapter argued that Rastafari adherents in Tshwane engage in rituals and celebrations to shape their identity. Many of the Rastafari rituals are performed by Rastafari adherents themselves. As patriarchal as Rastafari livity is, many responsibilities are assigned to men with little or no roles for women. It was clear that the boy and girl child birth rituals are different. The pregnancy defiles women and the purification period is longer should the child be female. During the purification period the men uphold kitchen duties as they do during the Rastafari

gatherings. The status of women is lower as they are limited to minor work during funeral, weddings and earth day celebration.

As discussed women's role in African traditional practices and *lobolo* are painted with subordination in society. Similarly to the Rastafari livity, women are excluded from the *lobolo* negotiations and sustain minimal work during the *lobolo*. In this instance, Rastafari women's power can be seen in their enforcement to exercise *lobolo* practice as part of their African identity. Most women do not leave their parents' house until after the *lobolo* is paid by their Rastafari Kingman. The issue of ancestral appeasing or worship cannot entirely be dismissed from Rastafari livity. Rastafari women, who practice as *Sangoma* and healers argue that it is their moral commitment to help the community by their spiritual gift. Although women are passive they fulfil their duties as secondary within the livity. The following chapter focuses on the position of women in Rastafari livity.



## **Chapter Six: Position of Tshwane Women in Rastafari Livity**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The chapter examines the social lifestyle of women in Rastafari livity both within the community and in Rastafari; it pays particular attention to their lived experience and how women in this patriarchal order influence the livity patterns. It investigates the fundamental aspects in Rastafari livity, the position of women, the gender relations and the women's relationship within the broader society, including the African traditional practices.

In attempting to widen the understanding of the women in Rastafari livity through their life histories, this chapter elaborates on the women's personal knowledge about Rastafari livity gained through direct and first hand involvement in everyday life. It seeks to investigate the gender relations among women and men within the household and community. According to Curthoys (1998:1), "gender is used as a tool to examine how assumptions surrounding concepts such as 'women', 'men', 'femininity', 'masculinity' and 'sexuality' operate within and relate to different aspects of life". Gender is a social construction that defines the gender performances and expectation by society. Gender has been identified by feminist research that assesses concepts which reveal gender inequalities between men and women. Gender inequalities may be noticeable within all public and private aspects of life.

The unequal treatment between genders puts women on a lower level than men. Women are passive and categorised in domestic areas, deprived of better income opportunities and decision-making. Women's participation in the decision-making process has been limited, within the context of a patriarchal system that imposes itself at all levels (Said-Foqahaa 2011:235). In such cases, women accept the cultural trait, which over the years becomes a norm within society and caters to men. In Rastafari livity, patriarchy perpetuates oppressive and limiting gender roles for women. For instance, the Rastafari men dominate in almost all aspects of life from sermon ceremonies, to home and financial responsibilities. In addition women should by all accounts remain submissive as based on the holy books. The gender inequalities among men and women are supported by the Rastafari livity which is about consciousness,

understanding of the prophecies, and knowledge of the Kebra Negast, the Bible, and African principles. All of these are adapted to form a coherent Rastafari livity and will be discussed.

This chapter is an account of how Tshwane women in Rastafari livity survive. Rastafari adherents have created a common identity through their attire, behavioural patterns and practices, in which they saw the number of women within the livity increased. The interesting story of women in Rastafari livity remains to be in the path to joining the livity. There are various ways which deliberate to joining the movement. The following are the two life histories of Sisters who came to Rastafari livity in different ways.

## **6.2 Two Rastafari Life Histories**

This section elaborates on the life histories of Sister Thipsta and Sister Elizah. These are two Rastafari women who were rooted into Rastafari livity from a very young age. The passages below elaborate on their life histories from childhood, through the teenage years to adulthood.

### **6.2.1. Sister Thipsta's life history**

#### **Early childhood**

Sister Thipsta was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1980 in Tshwane. She is the oldest of four children and has three siblings, a brother and two sisters. She was raised by both of her parents; her mother is a civil servant while her father was in and out of the family picture. She attended primary school in the Mabopane township of Tshwane. She grew up in a home that was very religious, continuously going to church and performing church rituals. She belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Sister Thipsta was not a girly girl, always playing among boys and had a very strong personality. She was brought up in a middle class family, in which they were not rich, nor were they poor, but survived with their parents' salary.

#### **Teenage years**

Although Sister Thipsta was rooted in the Roman Catholic Church she was often very naughty while growing up. When she was in Grade 10 she developed a love for a genre of music called reggae. She would listen to the likes of Lucky Dube, Jimmy Cliff, Bob Marley and the Wailers. The reggae music conveyed messages of Black Consciousness, Rastafari livity, liberation and love. She knew very little about Rastafari but embraced reggae music. Through listening to it, she learned about the popular symbolism of Rastafari, the colours, dreadlocks, ganja and *ital*.

Despite knowing very little about the movement at this point, Sister Thipsta wanted to embrace this Rastafari livity through the influence of her peers and the people she would hang around at local gatherings. She decided to lock (i.e., dreadlock) her hair as a sign of being a true African. According to her it was a way to deny Babylon, which was something reggae sang about.

When she was in Grade 11, in 2000, she locked her hair. This became a problem at school because it was against the school regulations. It also caused conflict at home because her parents told her that “as you lock your hair, your mind will also lock”. The parents were very upset and restricted her from listening to the ‘shady’ music of reggae. The more they pushed her away, the more she wanted to follow Rastafari livity. Sister Thipsta became rebellious and began to smoke marijuana. She was obligated to either unlock or cut her hair since dreadlocks were not part of the school uniform. Although she was denied the opportunity to grow dreadlocks she still loved reggae music. After matric she enrolled for a qualification a diploma in public management at college.

### **Adulthood**

During her studies as she travelled between her township and college, she met Jahman. He was an older Rastafari man whom she met on a train. He explained that for one to grow into Rastafari livity one had to associate and communicate with one’s own (Rastas or Rastafari adherents). Jahman taught her about Rastafari livity and invited her to occasions. Whenever there were Rastafari gatherings she would attend. This is where she met other sisters and brothers in Rastafari livity. It felt like home, a place she did not want to let go of. She elaborated that one does not come to Rastafari livity because one is dragged into it but because it is something spiritual. Regardless of her parents’ disapproval, Sister Thipsta grew her dreadlocks, and embraced Rastafari livity fully in college. She paid particular attention to the teachings Empress Menen Asfaw who was King Haile Selassie’s wife. She mentioned that this was because she wanted to be sure of the roles of Rastafari women.

Although she was still new, there was so much she needed to learn from the Mommas and the elders about Rastafari livity. It was a step by step transformation from smoking marijuana, to understanding the significance of meditating on the herb, the covering of one’s body and veiling the hair. She did not have any problem with Rastafari livity, *ital* and abstaining from Babylon’s ways. She elaborates that she was called into Rastafari livity because she could not

imagine her life without His Majesty. During this time, she also met her Kingman who is also a devoted Rastafari man. He played a vital role in her Rastafari livity experience as he was informative and knew more than she did. She completed her education and was employed but felt she could not survive in her workplace. The daily corporate space was a challenge and imprisoned her spirituality. This means she did not get enough time to spend with her family, or time to *Ise*s (relaxation through prayer and meditation or ganja smoking). Therefore, she left her job and opened her hair salon.

### **Current**

Sister Thipsta was married to her Kingman in 2005, the *lobolo* was paid and she had a Dub celebration at her home. Unfortunately, her mother passed away in 2009 but she retains a close relationship with her siblings and father. Today, she is married with three children and owns a hair salon. She stays in a rented house near to her business area and schools for her children. However, she owns a house in the rural areas and usually goes there to host Dub celebrations. The Kingman works outside the province and usually visits the family. When he is far from home he occupies the farm house. As part of Sister Thipsta's community project, she cooks and serves food to the youth who are addicted to *nyaope*<sup>24</sup>, which leads them to crime and violence. Although she is a fully committed Rastafari woman, she did not denounce her Roman Catholic beliefs because these laid a good foundation for her. It is the church that her late mother raised her in and she finds similarities between Roman Catholicism and Rastafari. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church where women dominate in terms of numbers, Rastafari continues to lessen the role of women within the livity. Both the religious groups are known to have male priests, which displays the characteristics of patriarchy. She stresses that she is a Rastafari woman committed to the livity.

#### **6.2.2. Sister Elizah's life history**

##### **Early childhood**

Sister Elizah was born on 16 June, 1980 in Finland. She is the firstborn, followed by a younger sister and a brother. She was raised by both her parents and the family were members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Her parents had two houses; one in the city and the second one in the countryside, without electricity. She learned to gather berries, mushrooms and to swim well. As a child she loved nature and camping. She comes from a middle class family

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<sup>24</sup> *Nyaope*, also known as *Whoonga*, is a potent street drug which includes both heroin and dagga.

upbringing. She did not live very far from her grandmother and would usually visit her as a child. She had a close relationship with her siblings and her parents.

When she was in primary school a friend of hers was given an assignment. Its topic was based on Rastafari livity. At the time, she did not understand who or what constituted Rastafari livity but she fell in love with the assignment topic. She took it upon herself to study what Rastafari livity was about as her friend researched the topic. She was infused by Rastafari livity, Jamaica and Ethiopia. Although she was only twelve years of age she developed a strong desire for drawing and painting. Most of her work was along the lines of Rastafari symbolism, the Lion of Judah, His Majesty King Haile Selassie. Sister Elizah explained that most of her childhood was concentrated around Rastafari expect for her parents who were Lutherans.

### **Teenage years**

By the time Sister Elizah turned fifteen she had done many paintings and drawings. She experienced a strong desire to do arts and craft works. The principles of what she had studied about Rastafari livity left a huge dent in her lifestyle. It was the natural lifestyle and the teaching of His Majesty that caused the massive change in her own lifestyle. She explains that she could not wait until she turned eighteen so she could lock her hair. Moreover, she was not really into the Lutheran principles as she thought they lacked morality. As a result, she was defiant and began to live her life contrary to the Lutheran Church's principles. She was a black sheep of the family and the relationship with her parents suffered. After high school, she enrolled for a BA degree in Finland, locked her hair and embraced the natural way of life. She became vegetarian and was very conscious of a natural lifestyle.

### **Adulthood**

When she turned twenty years of age she moved to England where she completed her Social Sciences Master's degree in developmental studies. Although she had longed to become a Rastafari woman, she was not ready to embrace it fully and wanted to study further. However, she did have a boyfriend who was Rastafarian but not a deeply conscientious one. They were both vegetarian, made paintings and lived what she calls "Rastafari livity". Whilst she was doing her fieldwork and writing her thesis, she travelled to South Africa, where she toured Cape Town for ten days. This is where she met RasJah who taught her about Rastafari beliefs.

She received funding for her studies and was able to stay for a longer period in South Africa. The main focus of her visit was an investigation into education and oppression. She did field work and held workshops in schools. She wrote her thesis in Finland and submitted it.

Thereafter she travelled to Israel and later went to Ethiopia where she became an art teacher in Shashemane. This is where she came across the Ethiopian Bible, studied more about Rastafari and learnt about His Majesty, Haile Selassie. She travelled from Ethiopia to Kenya by lorry for two days and three nights. In the latter country she met the Nyabbinghi elders. Sister Elizah saw most of His Majesty documentary films, felt a spiritual connection to him and also knew deeply that he was Jah. She stayed two years in Mombasa and Nairobi in Kenya.

She later went back to Ethiopia where she continued with teaching and paintings of His Majesty. After almost three years in Africa, she went back home to Finland where she only stayed for six months and flew back to Africa, this time to Tanzania. Whilst teaching in Tanzania she met Rastafari adherents and Christians. She was baptised in Rastafari livity and was given a name. This was very transformative as she had now become a Rastafari woman. She is now 2015 in South Africa, studying the Rastafari culture for a general principle.

The two life histories of Sister Thipsta and Sister Elizah illustrate that there are different paths to Rastafari livity. The genre of reggae music conveys the message of Rastafari and Rastafari livity through many people. It is not only the *riddims* (rhythm and lyrics) that enthuse people, but also the images and symbolism portrayed in the music videos. Furthermore, there are people who listen to and enjoy reggae music, but do not adopt Rastafari livity. Through Sister Thipsta's life history it became clear she was enthused by reggae music but later investigated more of the music and people behind it. Through her research, attending the Rastafari gatherings and associated with Rastafari adherents she came to greater understanding. She became rooted within the Rastafari livity. She thus understood the doctrine and principles of Rastafari with which she identified. Sister Elizah's introduction to Rastafari livity was, on the other hand, through a school assignment. She was also required to seek more knowledge through studying about Rastafari livity, His Majesty and Africa. Most of her art work, paintings and drawings were greatly encouraged by Rastafari. Like Sister Thipsta, she too had to do research via the internet and through engaging with Rastafari men and women at Dubs.

These were the ways that enthused the two women to become Rastafari adherents. It can be agreed that the music and assignment infused a desire to study further about Rastafari livity. Consequently, one would have to associate with the Rastafari men and women to gain an in-depth understanding. The two sisters began to attend the Rastafari gatherings, met the elders and eventually were accepted within Rastafari livity.

### **6.3 Pathways to Women Joining Rastafari Livivity in Tshwane**

There are people joining the Rastafari livivity within Tshwane through marriage, or who are enthused by reggae music and through Dub influence. No census has been done to estimate how many people have joined Rastafari livivity in Tshwane. Based on the interviews and observations, on every Dubs occasion attended, there were at least five new people on the path to joining Rastafari livivity. The following passages explain how other Rastafari women joined the livivity. The four identified ways are: through reggae music, through marriage, school projects, and being raised in the Rastafari movement.

#### **6.3.1. Reggae music**

According to Sister Thipsta, Sister Zollah, Sister Vonne, Sister Rosie, Sister Fiyah, Sister Asah, Sister Yarah, Sister Lee, Sister Roni and Sister Spirit all came into Rastafari livivity through their love for reggae music. It was this music genre that expressed and taught them about Rastafari livivity. The reggae music conveys messages of Black Consciousness, liberation and livivity. In many ways, reggae music is a tool used to encourage individuals to join the livivity. As Sister Vonne (18 June 2015) explains, her path to joining Rastafari livivity was influenced by reggae music and association with Rastafari men and women.

I grew up in a Christian household. We used to go to church every Sunday. But I rather say I grew into Rasta because I was about thirteen years of age when I raised into Rasta. I did not know what was Rastafari or the appearance of a Rastas. One day, one of my cousins from North West came to visit for a couple of days. He was a reggae collector and I would join him and listen to reggae, dancehall and roots. The music motivated me and created an eager for love of Rastafari. I wanted to learn more and be Rastafarian. The music was about positive vibes, anti-crime, war and anti-anything that is negative. It's about positive people, love and life and I wanted to be like them.

In my teenage years, I was surrounded by reggae music which played a fundamental role in shaping my life in Rastafari. My cousin was not Rasta but I wanted to know more about Rastafari. There was one guy in the area that always wore rainbow colours and had long dreadlocks. I would often see him around and later discovered that he was Ras Jozy who was the first Rasta I have ever seen. However, Ras Jozy disappeared and was nowhere to be found before I could communicate with him. I was heartbroken and didn't know when I will see Ras Jozy around. It was not long until I met a Sister in Rasta named Sister Firay. She has just moved in and stayed a couple of blocks away from my home. Sister Firay had brothers who were also Rastas. She was my senior in high school where we both attended. I also met a brother named Mtwes we were around the same age. We developed a strong bond and friendship which he exposed me into the Rastafari lifestyle.

Sister Vonne's journey developed from the love of reggae that infused a passion to learn more about Rastafari livity. The reggae lyrics communicate social issues and African Consciousness, and had an impact on the lifestyles of women. These impacts include a consciousness of being African, being conscious of social issues and learning about the history of African people. Through the music genre, many women further seek knowledge to understand Rastafari livity. It was through the Rastafari women's time, effort, observation and associations that they gained knowledge of Rastafari (His Majesty Haile Selassie), Rastafari livity and better understanding of Rastafari in general.

### 6.3.2. School projects

Educational institutions also played a fundamental role in introducing Rastafari livity among the students. This is evident in Sister Elizah's life story where a school project facilitated her interest in the livity. The life history of Sister Phetoh is similar in that she was also required to choose a topic for her school assignment. To some extent Rastafari literature had a tremendous effect on Sister Elizah and Sister Phetoh's lifestyles and they eventually joined the Rastafari livity. As Sister Phetoh (28 July 2014) explains, joining Rastafari livity is an experience which does not require a person to sign a registry form. It is something that one feels and eventually embraces through association with Rastafari men and women. She was very inquisitive growing up and wanted to acquire knowledge about everything. Sister Phetoh's journey into Rastafari livity began in high school, as explained below.

When I was in high school in Grade eight I had a life orientation project. The teacher gave us different churches or religion to do research and write an essay about it. Unfortunately, I got the Roman Catholic Church which I refused to do research on. I come from a Christian background with my grandmother as Roman Catholic, I knew the church settings and I wanted something different. My parents were called to the Principal office because of my refusal to write on the elected topic. After much consideration, I was asked to select any church or religion of my choice. I chose Rastafari and began to research on it. Firstly, I was introduced to Rastafari as a religion, I learnt about the livity, *ital* and the women's dress code. I wanted to know more and this is where my journey began.

According to Sister Phetoh (28 July 2014), she began to go to the local library after school to read and conduct more research. This is where she would see these two Rastafari men. At first, she was reserved about going and introducing herself. But she eventually had the courage to do so. According to her, they played a fundamental role in her development within Rastafari



livity. Both Sister Phetoh and Sister Elizah moved from studying Rastafari through books, engaging with Rastafari men and women to later joining the livity. Both Sister Phetoh and Sister Elizah agree that Rastafari livity is an ongoing process and a learning experience. The two consider themselves as Rastafari women who have fully consciously accepted the doctrines of Rastafari livity. Some other paths to becoming and joining Rastafari livity are through marriage, friends and family members as explained below.

### 6.3.3. Marriage, friends and family members

Another path that led women into Rastafari livity was through a close relationship with family members or friendships. According to Sister Tarry, Sister Nancy, Momma Aunty, Sister Jara, Sister Yoo, Sister Makhada, Sister Dih, Sister Jee, Sister Kamo and Sister Kay, becoming Rastafari is a process that needs commitment and dedication. Rastafari women mentioned that they came into Rastafari livity through the influences of close family members, brothers, nephews, sisters or even close friends. The transition to becoming Rastafari men and women takes years and is not an overnight event. Their strong desire led the women to have the passion to study more about Rastafari livity. Furthermore, they developed an interest in and made the effort to learn more about Rastafari livity.

It is often the case that when a woman is married she marries into the family or clan of the man. Therefore the woman adapts to the culture or religion of the man. When Momma Ruby got married she had to adjust to the Rastafari way of life. She could not leave and go to her church, nor cook using different pots, one for meat and the other for vegetables. It also meant that she had to slowly adjust to cooking *ital*, becoming *churchically* and obeying the principles of Rastafari. As Momma Ruby (03 April 2014) states,

I was not born into Rasta but got to married Poppa Jacob. I did not like going to Dubs or meeting sisters and brethren. Most of the time, I isolated myself and would only veil my head when going to the shops. Rastaman would come to visits Poppa Jacob and find me without the head turban. They overstood (understood) the situation and said when the time is right I will veil. It took me time to fully-cover my hair, stop eating flesh (meat) and salt.

Momma Ruby mentions that Poppa Jacob who did not force nor recruit her into Rastafari livity. As she was in her youth she was in love with him, bearing in mind that Poppa Jacob was a popular musician in town. It was the strong effect of Rastafari livity that drew her within this

way of life. Every day she learnt something new and eventually grew within Rastafari livity. According to her, she did so by socialising with men and women, attending Dubs, *Ises* and going to social gatherings.

For many reasons, Rastafari livity had a massive impact among lives of women as more so than any other religious group. For example, Sister Tarry (24 August 2014) had a Rastafari friend, who would invite her to Dubs or social gatherings. It was an exciting and different experience for her to be among Rastafari men and women. Sister Tarry explains that Rastafari is livity, a way of life and is not limited to a certain day, as compared to her Presbyterian upbringing. She would wear skirts or dresses whenever she went to church on Sunday. She would see her fellow church members on Sunday or Saturday when they had meetings. However, there was something very different about Rastafari livity which is not restricted to one day. It is a lifestyle she has come to love. One could not identify a Presbyterian Church member in the street or at school. There are no symbols or signs that this person belongs to the Presbyterian Church while it was very visible with the Rastafari way of life. Rastafari symbols and visibility in the public areas had an effect in her life. It is also the publicised Rastafari symbolism that draws ordinary people into the livity.

Sister Tarry attended her first Dub when she was sixteen years old. She would often go with her Rastafari friend. There were times when she became so comfortable that she was able to attend alone without her friend. Rastafari was different because it was an everyday event which weighed a lot on her religious convictions and ultimately overpowered the Presbyterian faith. The strongest contributing factor was the ideology of His Majesty Haile Selassie as the black Christ or the reincarnation of God. It was the promotion of blackness and African roots that led Sister Tarry into Rastafari livity. As Sister Yarah explains, Rasta is also an acronym for Righteous Africans Standing Alone. It is very much about embracing African history and way of life. The fact that Rastafari livity is not reserved for a specific day (Sunday) and promotes African livity makes it unique.

According to Momma Aunty, when her nephew (Lesego) came to stay with her, she did not know why he dressed the way he did, nor had she even heard about Rastafari. He had long dreadlocks and always embraced the Rastafari colours. He was self-employed, an artist and bead maker. He was very humble and respectful but smoked ganja which had negative connotations to her. Although Momma Aunty did not judge him, she was always observing his

behavioural patterns. For instance, whenever she dished up, he did not eat. Rather he preferred to stay in his backroom and prepare food for himself. When she would ask him why he did not eat with them, he explained that he does not touch meat, salt, and fish, but ate strictly *ital*. Momma Auntie liked cooking so she wanted to learn about this *ital* and taste it. There was a time when Lesego cooked for the whole family. It was delicious food but his cousins had to braai meat and add on salt. Momma Auntie elaborates that every day was fruitful as she wanted to learn and understand him. Most questions were asked with the word, why? Why did you lock your hair? Why do you take off your shoes and kneel before praying? As Momma Auntie clarifies, Lesego had answers to every question she asked. It took months to better understand Lesego and Rastafari livity. Momma Auntie had an inside preview about Rastafari through Lesego, who would sometimes bring along his Rastafarian friends to help him with beadwork.

Throughout the process, Momma Auntie learned beadwork, *ital* living and greeting with hand gestures. She graduated from Lesego's home teaching to attending a Dub celebration. The Dub celebration was different because she met Rastafari women, who wore long skirts and had turbans on. At the time, she only knew Lesego because he was the first Rastafari man in her family. She had to establish relations with Rastafari women. Becoming Rastafari was also not an overnight conversion; rather, it took years, as Momma Auntie began to attend Dubs, Rastafari meetings and other social activities. She eventually locked her hair as a technique to grow it and began to wear a turban that was given by a Rastafari sister. The transition to wearing skirts and dresses came naturally and she did not have a problem with doing this. Momma Auntie notes that she is still learning about Rastafari which is a continuous learning experience. The death of Lesego has brought her closer to Rastafari livity because he was the person who introduced her to Rastafari.

#### 6.3.4. Rastafari upbringing

According to Sister Dee Dee, she was raised by Rastafari parents who taught them about Rastafari livity. She has siblings, who unlike her, did not have the interest or desire to follow the Rastafari livity. It was Sister Dee Dee's personal choice to become a Rastafari woman. She stated that Rastafari livity had a different effect on her because it is a lifestyle, something she was raised into by her parents. She had siblings raised within Rastafari livity but who decided to rebel and take other paths in life. Sister Dee Dee's growth in Rastafari livity was also strengthened when she was married to a Rastafari man.

Sister Dee Dee was taught Rastafari at home, teaching about King Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey and the Bible. There were no literature or school classes that specifically taught about Rastafari. The Rastafari parents play a fundamental role in educating and guiding children within Rastafari livity. Although some people might be raised within Rastafari livity it does not guarantee that they will follow the latter. There are a variety of reasons such as personal decisions, influences or peer pressure at school which affect their behaviour. The fact that parents are Christians or follow Rastafari does not mean that the children will follow in their footprints.

Becoming Rastafari is a process in which persons are formally recognised and acknowledged within the house of Rastafari. The new members of Rastafari are accepted within the church. A new name is given to a new member who associates with Rastafari. They are formally accepted through baptism which can be followed by a Dub celebration. Rastafari also deals with the self-identity of a person. The Rastafari women have also established an identity among themselves and within Rastafari livity.

#### **6.4 Rastafari Women's Identity**

Despite the different journeys, women identify with the titles Rastafari women and Rasta women. The term Rastafarian with 'an' is not used as Rastafari is derived from His Majesty Haile Selassie whose full name, as indicated, is Ras Tafari. They also emphasise that they belonged to Rastafari livity and not Rastafarianism. The 'nism' denotes how Babylon defines Rastafari, something of which many followers disapprove. The problem of definition occurs when the "an" in Rastafari is included and the "nism" (Chawane 2012).

Rastafari identity is very distinctive in society because of the collective symbolism. They have created a shared identity among themselves within the townships of Tshwane. As Stets and Burke (2000:225) write, "a social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same category." Through a social comparison, Rastafari women are similar and categorised within Rastafari livity. Having a particular social identity means being at one with a certain group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective (Stets and Burke 2000:226). At the same time, identity is complex because it is approached from different angles. As Sarup (1996) notes,

identity has to do with more than one human aspect, particularly physical appearance. Rastafari identity deals with self, social, personal and cultural aspects. For example, as Momma Auntie (29 May 2015) explains:

People don't understand us, some even think we are crazy, they know we use ganja and wear dreadlocks. They don't know that we go to church, we care and share. Rasta is humbleness and having respect. Rasta is humanity and oneness. Rasta is in the heart, you become Rasta once you understand what it is about and you acknowledge His Majesty. There's no book you read that shows you steps to become Rasta you have to feel it within. I'm still learning Rasta but I've also made use of the Bible to increase my knowledge.

As indicated, the Rastafari House of Tshwane is dominated by men with few women. However, the number of women joining Rastafari livity is increasing through marriages, the influence of Dubs and interest developed through reggae music. As with Rastafari livity globally, the number of women within the Rastafari livity is very few. However, there is nonetheless, great involvement of the women within it.

### **6.5 Rastafari women oppression or liberation**

The literature on women in Rastafari has greatly been elaborated by Obiagele Lake's (1998a) book, *Rastafari women: Subordination in the midst of liberation theology*, which critiques the position of women in Rastafari and shows how women are relegated to the margins of the movement. It questions whether Rastafari can be a serious force for the liberation of the African diaspora when it makes women second-class citizens. Yawney (1978), who contributed greatly to Rastafari women's literature, describes women figures in the patriarchal religious and social ethos of Rastafari and secondly, even within patriarchy itself, Rastafari women can take the system on, to confront the system based on the gender implications, seniority and social orders.

Based on interviews and observations from the field, the Rastafari women addressed one another as Sisters, Empress, Queens or Mommas. The terms refer to younger and older women within Rastafari livity. For example, Sister, Empress and Queens denote younger Rastafari women. The older Rastafari women who are married or have children are referred to as Momma. Although Rastafari women use different terms to refer to one another they unite as one Rastafari woman.

One aspect of Rastafari livity is patriarchy that forms the foundation of the former. According to Buss (1996:317), “the term patriarchy is so unwieldy that it has been described as a panchreston, something that means different things to different people and purports to explain everything, but really explains nothing”.

The interview with Rastafari women earlier in the chapter has alluded to their lack of involvement in the church activities. At the same time, women claim to be active rather than passive because they appreciate the gender norms in the livity. There are specific areas within Rastafari livity that restrict the involvement of women in everyday life. However, some women are businesswomen, graduates from colleges and universities with the aim to empower themselves within Rastafari livity. It appears as Rastafari doctrine oppresses or denies women’s involvement in other sectors such as church activities and leadership position within the livity. In an interview with Sister Jara (16 July 2015) she expressed that women’s oppression in Rastafari livity may relate mainly to the dress code. However, she argues that it remains to be an individual’s choice whether or not to follow the doctrines of Rastafari or regard it as oppression.

It’s not oppression; it’s up to an individual who enters into Rasta. It’s Rasta. It’s up to you to either feel *irie* of the livity or not. This is an issue of self; some might feel oppressed by the head wrap or long dresses. If you define it as oppression you can wear trousers or leave. I feel very comfortable with my long skirts. Still it’s not for me to judge anyone which might feel oppressed or pressured to dress like that. They undress it’s not for you or me to judge only Jah knows their heart, who am I to judge? Or question why they have undressed? I see pressure among sisters when one looks at the next one and start complaining. What is it that you are saying about yourself? Why should you judge others?

Rastafari women have limited liberation outside the livity, specifically in lobolo negotiation. They are free to have opinions and work in senior positions without any restrictions by any doctrines. However, that cannot be said within Rastafari livity as women have to comply and abide by their positions as Rastafari women. The study reveals two sides of them: firstly those who feel women can positively contribute through engaging in leadership positions and church. Secondly, Rastafari women feel they play a bigger role within the livity irrespective of their gender because they stress that they are not oppressed.

## 6.6 Gender Relations

Rastafari livity is well known to be a male dominated movement in which women are submissive to their men. Based on Rastafari, patriarchy itself denotes nothingness because women do not feel oppressed within Rastafari livity. Rastafari women appreciate their roles within the livity without any declaration of superiority or dominance by men. The Bible teachings which are highly selective remain a fundamental tool for them. It was also found that when many Rastafari women accepted the livity, they did recognise that there were patriarchal undertone to this livity. Furthermore, it was revealed that women in fact appreciate the gender norms and morals imposed upon them as women

Rastafari gendered roles have helped women shape a space for themselves. According to the study it was revealed that Rastafari women can express their opinion, participate in Dub occasions and are the bedrock of Rastafari livity. Many Rastafari women regard themselves as Queenly, which refers to being dignified, independent and embodying the characteristic of Queen Omega. Whereas others feel women can take leadership positions such as priesthood within Rastafari livity. Rastafari women believe that men and women are equal but have different positions to fulfil as part of Rastafari livity. As part of life women are also faced with challenges such as limited participation and restriction within major roles in the Rastafari livity.

There are challenges Rastafari women face both within the movement and community as a whole. The following findings are based on the lived experiences of Rastafari women at home, as regards finances and gender dynamics. These challenges are characteristic of the local South African context in the townships of Tshwane. It is evident through interviews that Rastafari women experience challenges which are mostly related to them as South African Rastafari women, not as related to the global context. The greatest challenges faced by participants at home were resentment. According to Sister Makhada, being Rastafari caused tension between her and her family (parents and siblings). She was treated differently because she chose Rastafari livity. It was known to her parents and siblings that she had done so.

Sister Makhada explains three scenarios that showed discrimination at home. Firstly, food was an issue at home because she did not eat meat and had to find a substitute. Secondly, the clothing issue: she would be teased and called names by her siblings because of her long garments and covering of her head. Thirdly, the praying hours: there are certain hours reserved

for prayer and these did not sit well with her siblings too. Sister Makhada stresses that at first her parents and siblings did not understand her behaviour and thought it would change, bearing in mind that she was a problematic child; but Rastafari livity humbled her. The Rastafari garment played an imperative role to humble as it was visible within the community. She became respected and acknowledged as Rastafari woman because of the garment.

#### 6.6.1. Rastafari attire

The other heavily discussed challenge of Rastafari women is to keep to the required attire. As these particular lines (Deuteronomy 22:5) declare, “A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.” During the Biblical times men and women wore a loose, woollen, robe-like cloak or mantle as an outer garment, there were no trousers, shorts or dresses; something which Rastafari women are forbidden to wear. In other words, the Bible specifies the behaviour and attitude women should uphold and not the type of dress code. As these particular lines (1Timothy 2:9-10 King James Version) declare, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

According to Sister Roni (21 August 2014),

Rasta women should present themselves as queens, respectful, responsible and look able. No stomach showing, knees, chest or shoulders. They should be decent and not be exposed. They should be comfortable in the attire they wear, able to kneel down without anything showing and be comfortable in the presence of men. But it's all a personal choice; there are other Rasta women who don't veil at all, who wear dress and skirts that go above the knees.

It is a personal choice to abide by or strictly follow the accepted clothing rules within Rastafari livity. As Sister Lee (04 June 2014) states, we live in a place whereby the body is not respected and you see that through some of the clothing. But mine is not to judge because it's written in Romans 14:4 “Who are you to judge the servants of someone else? It is their own Master who will decide whether they succeed or fail.” I embrace Rasta and as women we should show that we are Rastafarians through our doings and clothing”.



Rastafari women are known to cover their dreadlocks both in private and public areas. This remains a challenge especially for Sister Roni and Sister Jara who work in the corporate world and are forbidden to wear the turban. Many Rastafari women argue that dreadlocks are their pride and honour and should be covered at all times. In changing times Rastafari women are obligated to unveil in order to abide by the work policies. It can be argued that wearing a turban is a choice among Rastafari women. It is something that they can abide by, within Rastafari livity. Based on interviews it was highlighted that work policies and dress codes are the outer expression of Rastafari livity and do not define the self. Rastafari women, whether veiled or unveiled, should understand their position within Rastafari livity.

Contrary to this, Rastafari women who wear the long clothes, turbans and entirely abide by Rastafari livity principles can be seen as oppressed, in the same way that Muslim women wear the hijab<sup>25</sup> are often described as. Rastafari and Muslim women have a choice to either veil or not veil. The Muslim religion is constituted and largely recognised perhaps – in some ways visible- however is considerably older and more established than Rastafari which is a relatively way of life. This explains the challenges of Sister Ronie and Sister Jara who unveil or cover their crown with their dreadlocks showing.

Rastafari attires imply oppression for outsiders. According to Walby (1990:20) “in this systems women’s labour power, women’s reproduction, women sexuality, women’s mobility and property and other economic resources- are under patriarchal control”. According to Sister Tarry,

People think I am oppressed, they would ask me to take off my turban, wear a trouser or loosen up. Some people even say, I should loosen up. But they don’t understand that the clothes do not define me as Rastafari. The clothes are an expression of Rasta, I am not oppressed if I was I would have left Rasta a long time ago.

Rastafari and Islam draw a deeper comparison between women embracing the livity. The Rastafari and Muslim women’s adherence to their belief system gives them a common identity that serves to bridge the cultural and social differences between them.

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<sup>25</sup> Hijab is the head covering that many Muslim women wear.

For instance, both women veil and cover their head as part of the culture, the long garments are essential to honour their bodies and the status of women are text in the Qur'an and Bible. Some of the stereotypes are table by Abu-Lughod (2006) as women being oppressed, inferior and unequal to men. Based on the comparative analysis the role of women is of great importance and justifiable by Bible and Qur'an. However, this does not mean that men and women are equal rather have significant roles in society which does not supersede the other. Moreover, Muslim women are not obligated to earn or spend on housing or food. If she is married, it is the responsibility of the husband to fully support her. On the contrary, Rastafari women hold different perspective on financial responsibility as seen on the next section.

#### 6.6.2. Financial responsibility

South Africa still exhibits elements of a patriarchal society (Walby 1990). On average, women still earn less than men; there is still the expectation that the role of women be restricted to child care, caring for the sick and fetching water and fuel, rather than being economically productive and employed, and engaging adequately with the broader economy (Department of women, Republic of South Africa 2015). South African women are faced with gender inequality both at home and within companies. It becomes difficult for women to be financially independent as many women are reliant on their male counterpart for basic social needs.

In some cases, women become financially reliant which can result in emotional and physical abuse. Rastafari women's financial circumstances are no different to those of other South African women. It is evident that the financial circumstances are a women's issue, particularly within the household and corporate environment. There are three similarities that can be tabled between Rastafari women and women in general. Firstly, women are financially dependent on men, secondly women in the workplace earn less and lastly, their roles are largely constrained to domestic areas.

The financial status of Rastafari women in South Africa, compared to Rastafari women globally, is no different. The research finding identified the said status of these women in South Africa. Based on interviews, Rastafari women's roles are centred on domestic areas: such as buying groceries, taking care of the children and household duties. According to Rowe (1998:72), "on the other side, Rastafari men are responsible for financial responsibilities within the house. This includes to give women money for daily needs." Most of the women

interviewed were stay-at-home mothers without a basic annual salary. They relied heavily on their husbands who are self-employed. The following questions were asked: Who takes care of finances? How do you split the financial responsibilities? The women emphasised that they are equal to men but different because of the roles they each perform. According to Sister Makhada (13 May 2015) who is a stay-at-home mother;

The Queen and King work together to help each other. When he brings money, I buy food to cook and help at home. When there's food or money and no one to take care of it, it's useless. So help each other and fill the gaps.

In the case where a Rastafari woman is employed and the man is jobless, she becomes responsible for basic needs and domestic areas. According to Rowe (1998:73), "thus the male is the family's breadwinner, and in instances where the female works, she functions as a source of financial support to the male, who continues to hold primary financial responsibility for the family". It means that women's income is facilitated by men who also provide support in some areas of domestic life (Rowe 1998). An interesting observation made is that Rastafari women's finances and income are monitored by men; it is the normal condition of Rastafari women's and men's relationships within Rastafari globally. When Sister Makhada was asked, she demonstrated that the Kingman<sup>26</sup> is responsible for household finances. Thus, it meant that she receives money from him. Based on an interview with Sister Jara, who is a businesswoman, she argued that she and her Kingman help each other in terms of domestic chores and financial responsibilities. In the case of stay-at home mothers, all the finances are controlled by men. However, in changing times women seem to have taken the lead in finances. Many women now are financial providers for their families as well; they have willingly adopted a traditionally male role. It seems that women and men usually share the provider role whereas the role of being homemaker and nurturer continues to be solely the woman's responsibility (Tichenor 2005:191-205).

The money and financial responsibility among the interviews with Rastafari women was a challenge because many felt uncomfortable to talk about it; especially the stay-at-home-mothers who relied heavily on their male counterparts. When asked about the money or the earnings of the Kingman, most of the women indicated that it is enough for taking care of the

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<sup>26</sup> Kingman symbols royalty and embodies King Haile Selassie characteristics. Rastafari women used the word to refer to their partners or husbands.

family, but did not get into details. When asked about the value of their work, Sister Lee (04 June 2014) stated:

I am taking care of the children and including him. My work at home is even greater because I am 24/7 whereas he only works weekdays. According to me the sisters work harder but we are a team. I am not working he bring the financial support in the house.

Rastafari men wield power and authority over women because of their maleness or because they have money. Whether a Rastafari man is employed or not, they still control the income of their female counterpart. The financial statuses of Rastafari women in South Africa and globally are not different. For instance, Rastafari women around the world are also faced with patriarchy and are regarded as subordinates to men (Lake1998b).

#### 6.6.3. Rastafari women and the Bible

The Bible is the Christian Scriptures, consisting of the Old and New Testaments. The Rastafari adherents' beliefs are based on the Old Testament. However, some Rastafari women and men make use of the Old Testament whereas others use both the Old and the New Testament, as per the interview with Sister Nancy. The research findings established that both Old and New Testaments Scriptures are used to justify the Rastafari livity. According to the Rastafari belief system, White oppressors corrupted the true teachings and understanding of the Bible. Rastafari adherents interpret the text to indicate that Black people are the true Israelites and God's chosen people. They interpret some stories of the Bible to reflect the history of their oppression. According to Poppa Jacob, the King James Version of the Bible is strongly preferred within Rastafari livity. He notes that the Holy Piby and Kebra Nagast are also important when talking about scriptures or Bible in Rastafari livity.

Rastafari men and women uphold some of the Biblical laws on diet and dress code by (Lake 1998b). Rastafari women's roles are described in the Scriptures (both in Old and New Testament). According to Leviticus 12: 1-15, women were not allowed to become priests. However, the Old Testament tells a narrative of Judith who challenged the stereotypes about women in both the ancient and the modern worlds. There are few names used about women in Biblical texts. Women should be submissive and obedient to their male counterparts and were created to be a man's helper in all aspects of life. Accordingly, the Bible indicates a system of authority to maintain harmony in the family, the church, and society. It is a system in which

men are guaranteed the role to lead over women. According to this passage (Genesis 3:16), “Unto the woman He said ... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee”. Rastafari men dominate over women in finances, the home and the leadership position in church and gatherings. At the same time, Rastafari women should be strong supporters and followers within the livity. The women appear to have equal status but restricted doctrinal rights (Rowe 1998:76).

Rastafari women’s behaviour is structured by the Bible scriptures to be that of responsible helpers. At the same time, Rastafari doctrine was articulated by men, making women secondary to men in all accounts. As based on Genesis 2:18 the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him”. The women as helpers are mothers, wives and daughters who are caretakers as the Book of Proverbs elaborates (Proverbs 31:16).

12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

The findings established that women acknowledge that most practices in Rastafari livity are evolving and should accommodate the changing times. It is a fact that the Bible sets restrictions for women’s involvement in leadership position. However, there were women who challenged the domination in the Bible. For example the Book of Judges talks about Deborah and Judith, Priscilla and Queen Esther are some women who greatly took leadership positions. For this reason, women have always been important and God called time and again to assume to leaderships positions in the community.

Within Rastafari livity preaching is strongly dominated by men. The Bible acknowledges women’s position in leadership and indicates how God used women in everyday life. According to Sister Elizah who has lived almost ten years in different East African countries, Rastafari doctrine is nonetheless on the route to change as based on her personal experiences.

I an I<sup>27</sup> have seen all kinds of variations and in some areas the sistrens lead Sabbathical gatherings like in Mombasa and even in Shashemane at times, also I think Mama B is rather powerful in Marcus Garvey in Cape Town. Also in Zimbabwe “I an I” was personally praying around the altar with six others out of which three were women. Currently the leader of National Nyabbinghi council in Harare is Empress Ethiopia, a very powerful woman. So, there is change, and bredren are slowly accepting me too as a priestess. In last coronation in Finland I was personally the one making the altar and reading the Bible and chanting the psalms and praying, when bredren were just drumming, as I am more experienced and spiritual in Finland than anyone else living priestly livity for years and years.

The statement shows the current state of affairs of Rastafari women in some parts of Africa. It is clear that Rastafari livity is not the same everywhere. In other African countries Rastafari women engage in leadership positions such as the priesthood. In some of the religious sects charismatic Christian churches women are allowed to preach whereas others restrict women’s participation in preaching. According to Momma Sifi there was a time when women were given the platform to preach.

We preach....I recall this other Sabbath we went to Church and we preached. But it was unusual for us to preach or talk during the *I ses*. It was my first time at Momma Sony’s Dub to stand up and preach. The priests said that no one would leave without saying a word or reading a scripture, giving thanks or a testimony. They actually make us strong to be able to speak the word, preach in front of people. This is empowering to women because when we go gather with other women in Cape Town, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal how will we be able to preach? It starts here at home so that we can get used to speaking and preaching as sisters.

Momma Sifi states that it was a first in the order of Twelve Tribes of Israel for a woman to preach because it is unusual for women to preach or render a message in the midst of men. Many of the Rastafari men stressed that it is important for women to know the Bible. There are specific areas when women can freely preach when attending a Dub or memorial service. In the case of a funeral, where the deceased is a woman, Rastafari women are also given a platform to preach. Momma Sifi stressed the need for empowering women amongst which would be preaching.

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<sup>27</sup> “I an I” is an expression to totalize the concept of oneness, the oneness of two persons.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The Rastafari women stem from different cultural and religious backgrounds but came into Rastafari livity through reggae music, influence or marriage. The life histories revealed the narratives of women in Rastafari livity. The chapter revealed that the gender relations which explained on the male dominance and subordination of women. It was elaborated that women indeed appreciate the gender norms and performance in Rastafari livity. The main reason, that many women accepted the livity knowingly that there are patriarchal undertones to the livity. Even so, Rastafari women created their identity and visibility both in Rastafari movement and the community at large.

Rastafari women hold position as stay-at-home mothers, businesswomen and work in the government departments. The women who are stay-at-home mothers dependent on their Kingman for full support and financially. However, the employed Rastafari women keep balance as they assist financially within the household. A comparative analysis was made between Rastafari and Islam livity that revealed the roles of women and stereotypes that suggest their inequality and inferiority in society. It was revealed that both these women share commonality in terms of rules surrounding the garments, covering of the head and are instructed by the holy scriptures.

It may seem that women are oppressed but they are oppressed in a general patriarchal system of South Africa such as, women earn lesser than men, women have junior positions and lobolo is often described as patriarchal. Rastafari women are appreciative of the gender norms as they view Empress Menen Asfaw as their role model in the movement. Therefore, women accept that men are leaders but they also contribute greatly within the Rastafari movement of Tshwane.

## **Chapter Seven Conclusion**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This study has explored, analysed, and described the lived experiences of Rastafari women in Tshwane. It aimed to create a holistic understanding of Rastafari women's issues and has augmented the body of research about Rastafari livity. I summarised the essence of the explored themes in each chapter and re-examine these summaries here to round off the developed perspective.

My interest in the lived experiences of Rastafari women was initiated by an interest in reggae music hence, my focus on Rastafari women in the townships of Tshwane. It seemed apparent that women's voices are invisible and Rastafari is often seen as patriarchal whereby power is primarily held by men.

In light of this perception I wanted to explore women's lived experiences in this religion. Spanning a number of years (2013-2016), significant and detailed ethnographic material was collected by means of a number of research methods, techniques and this dissertation is the result of that labour. In light of a lack of literature that pays particular attention to Rastafari women in South Africa my dissertation fills an important space hopefully providing a useful historical overview, and current lived experiences of Rastafari women from an anthropological perspective.

Rastafari has been studied and presented in different contexts by scholars around the world (see 1.2). The literature describes Rastafari as a culture, religion, identity, Black Consciousness movement and transnational movement. Most of literature relates to the history and emergence of Rastafari in the Caribbean Island of Jamaica. Furthermore, I traced literature evidence to the establishment of Rastafari in Tshwane in order to augment our contextual understanding of Rastafari women's lived experiences there.

### **7.2 The duties of Rastafari women in Tshwane**

The lived experiences of Rastafari women reflect their personal experiences. It showed that Rastafari livity is strongly patriarchal with a deep sense of male domination in almost all aspects in the movement. Furthermore, Rastafari women have created a social space for



themselves within this patriarchal system. The Empress Menen Asfaw preach on the doctrine of Rastafari women (see 2.10).

As shown in Chapter two, Rastafari women view Empress Menen Asfaw as a role model and vow to live by the principles. The roles ascribed to women in Rastafari is quite often based around household or private (as opposed to public) duties. However, this does not mean women exclude themselves from the community. In fact, they see themselves as part of community, thus they have strong beliefs that they can transform the community through some of their duties as fulfilling the principles of Rastafari.

Rastafari women are community builders who also constantly take care of the community. It is their moral committed to share the love and educate. Moreover, duties are accompanied by responsibilities that Rastafari women adhere to as part of their livity. Even as most women seem to accept the roles that they have within Rastafari, they also question the domination of men in almost all aspect of the livity.

### **7.3 The responsibilities of Rastafari women**

The responsibilities of Rastafari women are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The chapters details women's responsibilities within all aspects of life. As based on the study, Rastafari women's responsibilities during Rastafari occasions are:

#### **7.3.1 *Isees* or church sermons**

Rastafari women have strongly indicated that men are preachers and priests, in other words fulfilling public duties of the livity. The sermons have been entirely the responsibility of men, to read the scriptures and play the drums. It was indicated that women can preach or give a word during women's gatherings or sermons. Nonetheless, the preaching of an integrated sermon remains the duty of men and women are listeners and passive observers.

#### **7.3.2. Dub celebrations.**

Rastafari women were labelled as powerful because of their fertility, which is something that men highly respect of them. During the Dub celebration and within the family, Rastafari women are caretakers. They look after the Kingman and children both at home and during the celebration. By doing so they ensure the safety and well-being of their families.

Dub celebrations are open to a variety of people in the community. It is a window of opportunity for members to interact and learn about Rastafari. During the dub celebrations

women are available to share knowledge among themselves and to teach and educate outsiders about Rastafari. Most importantly, they get the chance to chant and share the dancing space with them.

It is the key mandate for Rastafari women to keep to their moral commitment and doctrine of Rastafari. The Bible, both Old and New Testament are an integral part of Rastafari livity. The Rastafari women revealed that they are guided by the Bible in terms of how they should conduct themselves. The authors of the books in the Bible came from patriarchal societies. As a result, men are named in the Biblical stories more often, and men hold positions of leadership more often than women. However, Rastafari women make reference to Bible scriptures and women in leadership positions like Deborah, Ruth and Miriam. It is clear that as time goes on Rastafari status quo will be influenced by women.

### **7.3 Roles of Rastafari women**

Based on the perceptions regarding their roles within the family, movement and community, Rastafari women revealed that their social order is to be nurturers, guiders and leaders in their own ways. It is believed that they play a greater role as Queens, which are not limited to housekeeping, childbearing and looking after the Kingman. Rastafari women are the leaders and educators

As indicated in Chapter 2 Rastafari adherents have established a visible identity as they have worldwide. This identity in general comprise dreadlocks, their colours red, green and gold, ganja , reggae, Patwah, Dub celebrations and Rastafari colours. As a result, Rastafari women became visible because of their attires. Sister Makhada explained that Rastafari women become unconscious educators within the community. As one is walking to the shops or riding in a taxi, people ask about one's attire and headwrap. Therefore, Rastafari women become educators and spread Rastafari in the community.

Rastafari women are leaders of their own paths. They honour principles that deal with their body and physical representation.

### **7.4 The role of Rastafari women after childbirth**

According to Rastafari women, males and females differ from the moment of conception when sex is determined. The biological differences are the main basis of their gender role differences. The birth of girls causes greater impurity in terms of the Levitical Purity Codes whereas boys are leaders and gloried. Chapter 5 deliberated on birth rituals observed by Rastafari women

who entirely adhere to three months' time difference between a male and female child. During the period, Rastafari women must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. At this stage, the Kingman's role is to be a housekeeper, to cook, clean and take care of the women.

### **7.5 Rastafari women and lobolo practices**

As discussed in Chapter 5 many Rastafari women adhere to the *lobolo* practice as part of their livity. It was indicated that it is part of their African tradition that cannot be eliminated from Rastafari. However, with regard to *lobolo* there are two kinds of Rastafari women, firstly the women who argued that *lobolo* is important because it is both a spiritual and a social family affair. Secondly, some Rastafari women are married to Rastafari men without *lobolo*. As based on the interviews Rastafari livity does not endorse *lobolo* or marriage, which is an invention of society. Rastafari adherents enjoy the love between the couple which is prior and superior to subsequent societal rites. In fact, marriage to them is commitment to the relationship, sharing and loving the person. Most women are in committed relationships, have children and live happily with their Kingman even in the absence of *lobolo* payments.

*Lobolo* practices, like Rastafari, have subordinate roles for women in society. At the stage of negotiations, women are the housekeeper, cleaning the yards and taking care of the guests. The roles of negotiation are performed by men excluding women. Nonetheless, most Rastafari men are obligated to pay the bride price should they wish to take a non-Rastafari partner. Furthermore, there are power dynamics and shifts by women behind closed doors. In a focus group, Rastafari women indicated that their elders and parents should be considerate in *lobolo* negotiations. It was imperative to have a reasonable bride price so that they can move away from home to build their own families.

### **7.6 Initiation and ancestral worship**

The African traditional practices of initiation and ancestral worship are forbidden in Rastafari livity. However, as discussed like the case with *lobolo*, people do integrate various traditions with their Rastafari livity, and ancestral worship is no different. Women hold the perspective that African practices and Rastafari cannot be separated from one another. As mothers, teachers and guiders within the home and outside, Rastafari women revealed their contribution towards the rites of passage. Some women revealed that as based on their upbringing they participated in *Lebollo* and initiations. Therefore, as mothers they would adhere to their belief systems as

African women. It means that they would encourage male and female initiation among the youth. However, there are conflicting perspectives on initiation.

Some African traditional practices are highly observed within Rastafari. The issue of ancestral worship or appeasing is a personal affair. The women emphasised that they are African first before they are Rastafari adherents. Thus, ancestral appeasing cannot be entirely dismissed from Rastafari. The Rastafari women as prayer warriors indicated the significance of ancestral appeasing as part of one's culture.

According to the Rastafari women whom I interviewed, to become a *Sangoma* is a calling. This is a spiritual calling that cannot be denied because of one's Rastafari livity. Rastafari women who practice as *Sangoma* are healers within the community. They function as diviners and spiritual helpers. Although there are different sentiments about Rastafari livity and *Sangomas*, women revealed their contribution both in Rastafari and the broader community. While some men (and even women) may disagree with this, such a syncretic assimilation of various beliefs are not unusual in syncretic religions.

### **7.7 The position of Rastafari women**

Rastafari livity reflected the evolution of women's position in the status hierarchy in terms of occupation, income and social order. The status was measured by the following, to what extent women enjoy freedom in matters relating to marriage, the movement and in the community, how are their opinions honoured and how far are they given equal treatment. It was revealed that women believe in balance between men and women, thus, discrediting the evil of ignorance and oppression within Rastafari. The Rastafari women's opinions matter within the movement at large. There are times and spaces where women can voice up, but not in the presence of men.

As earlier discussed in Chapter 6, the changes to the position of women were influenced by Empress Menen Asfaw. As a result, women today are stay-at-home mothers, businesswomen and work in government departments, in other words private roles. Rastafari women contribute towards the growth of the country. However, they have identified challenges that prevent them from working for government or even in the private sector. It was highlighted that Rastafari women are discouraged from wearing the headwrap and long robes at certain government departments. Although they had the right to exercise their belief systems, some women left their jobs whereas others submitted to the policies.

Rastafari women who hold professional positions in the work place, indicated that they are still house keepers and administers within their private spaces. As working women, they facilitated the growth and protection of the houses, by contributing equally towards the finances within the household. In the case where women are stay-at-home mothers, their position is as managers who are responsible for household duties and groceries. The Kingman are responsible to allocate a certain amount to the women weekly or monthly. It makes women dependent entirely on their Kingman in terms of finances. Rastafari women, like other women, have a lower social status in the community. Although they have professional positions they suffer inequalities within all social levels.

This anthropological study enabled me to gain an understanding of how Rastafari women experience Rastafari livity. It is therefore possible to conclude that women shape their identity and space by following the teachings of Empress Menen Asfaw. They regard themselves as powerful Queens who equally perform their gender roles within the livity. Finally, Rastafari women question male domination but appreciate the position they hold as women in Rastafari livity.

### **7.8 Shortcomings of the research**

This study was an anthropological perspective into the lived experiences of Rastafari women in Tshwane. My intent with this study was to bring to light women who joined the movement and their lived experiences in what is often described as a patriarchal order and the invisible patriarchal dimensions operating in the movement as inferred from the duties, roles, responsibilities and status of women in the movement. Although the study was a success and elaborated on different aspects of Rastafari livity, it has left many gaps and was unable to answer the following issues:

The sexual health of Rastafari women

The study was unable to discuss the sexual health of Rastafari women. It was difficult to discuss sexual matters such as abortion, and perspectives surrounding contraceptives. Some of the issues of sexual nature are kept very private and sacred between partners. Therefore, I decided to entirely focus on their own lived experiences and not open a topic of discomfort. I now realise that sexual health among Rastafari women is a topic that needs further research in Tshwane.

## Divorce in Rastafari

There should be further discussion on how women conduct divorces or separation in the livity. The study was unable to uncover the divorce or separation rule in a case whereby a woman is unhappy and wants to leave the relationship. The issue of unhealthy or abuse can lead to the dispute and separation. The question for further research can be, do women put Rastafari livity into disrepute should they propose separation?

## Rastafari women as priests and elders

The study was unable to determine whether or not there are female Rastafari priests in Tshwane and what the future prospects are, although it was revealed that in some parts of the continent women are priests.

## Rastafari women and health with regard to the ganja

The study did not access enough information on health and ganja. The benefits of ganja from Rastafari perspective was analysed with little attention to health care.

## Rastafari Patwah

The Rastafari adherents have managed to create their own language Patwah, which is spoken by men, women and children. The study was not linguistic neither did it show the historical context of Patwah, the role the language plays in Rastafari and whether or not it can be strengthened.

## Future of gendered roles in Rastafari

Rastafari women are discriminated against in many ways, such as when they are participating in Dub occasions. Although they are Queens, they still occupy subordinate positions within the livity. The women showed great interest in contributing in most activities. As time changes the gendered roles are also influenced. Further studies should focus on the transiting roles of women in the movement.

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